

Netanyahu: Syrian conditions for peace talks 'unacceptable'

TEL AVIV (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Monday called Syria's conditions for restarting peace talks with Israel "unacceptable."

On-again off-again talks between Israel and Syria have failed to resume since Mr. Netanyahu took office in June 1996. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will meet with leaders of both countries as part of her first Mideast tour, next week.

"Of course we can go forward on the Syrian track — if the Syrians want to," Mr. Netanyahu told Israel radio. "It is not dependent only upon us. We want negotiations — I have said so since the beginning of my prime ministership — and we have been looking for ways to restart the negotiations. But we cannot conduct negotiations with ourselves."

"The Syrians' conditions for entering into negotiations are basically their end

demands, which is unacceptable," Syria demands Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since the 1967 Mideast war. The previous Labour-led Israeli government had said it was willing to discuss an Israeli withdrawal, and Syria has insisted talks continue where they left off.

But Mr. Netanyahu, who opposes returning the Golan, has said any understandings reached between

Syria and previous Israeli governments are not binding on his administration.

Mr. Netanyahu added that resuming negotiations was in the interests of both countries.

"We both want to avoid growing tensions in Lebanon, and I think Syria understands that the benefits they will get from a peace — economic and political and geopolitical — are great, just as they are for us."



PROTESTING UNRWA DECISION: Palestinian children on Monday pose with placards in front of burning tyres during a protest in the 'Ain Al Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp, against the decision of the United Nations Relief and Work Agency to freeze university scholarships, all cash emergency assistance for hardship cases and shelter rehabilitation. To cope with the fiscal squeeze, the relief agency who helps 3.4 million Palestinian refugees, has had to cut international staff by 15% to 135 and cancel the hiring of 250 new teachers needed to cope with a fresh intake of 11,000 students this year (AFP photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

PNA police round up 120 thieves of Israeli cars

HEBRON (AFP) — Palestinian police have arrested 120 people in Hebron in a sweep against car theft rings targeting Israelis, officials said Monday. The crackdown over the past two days was ordered by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and will be followed by similar roundups in other autonomous areas of the West Bank, a security source said. The 120 men arrested in Hebron would be taken to court, he said. Since the extension of Palestinian self-rule to seven West Bank towns and cities in late 1995 and early 1996, Israeli police charge that thousands of cars have been stolen from Israel and taken to the autonomous areas, usually to be dismantled for a black market in spare parts.

Libya marks Qadhafi anniversary

TUNIS (R) — Libya celebrated on Monday the 28th anniversary of Muammar Qadhafi's seizure of power with an air force display in the skies over Tripoli. State-run television, monitored from Tunis, showed fighters, helicopters and other military aircraft flying over the capital city. The display included fighters bought from France and the former Soviet Union and lasted at least three hours. "This force is to face anyone who dares attack (installations in) this country," the television said. Mr. Qadhafi, an army colonel who took power in a bloodless coup on September 1, 1969, was expected to address the nation on television later in the day. Tripoli-based diplomats said it was the first show of its kind in Tripoli since 1992, when Libya has been placed under an arms embargo imposed by the U.N.

Iraq decorates pilgrims who defied U.N. ban

BAGHDAD (R) — Muslim pilgrims who defied the U.N. air embargo on Iraq and flew to Saudi Arabia last April have been awarded bravery orders, an Iraqi newspaper said Monday. "On behalf of President Saddam Hussein, Minister of Endowment and Religious Affairs, Abdul Muneim Ahmad Saleh, decorated with bravery orders pilgrims of the plane of faith to Mecca who defied the air embargo imposed by the forces of infidel," Al Qadisiyah said. Iraq in April flew 104 Muslim pilgrims to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj, defying sanctions barring international flights by Iraqi aircraft.

Iranian executed for spying for U.S.

TEHRAN (AP) — A man was executed for spying for the United States, the official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported Monday. Seyavash Bayani was hanged last week in Tehran's Evin prison for passing military secrets to the Central Intelligence Agency, IRNA reported. Bayani was arrested in 1995 and confessed to spying for the U.S., the agency said. Bayani left Iran in 1984 and received political asylum in the U.S., where he lived for 11 years, said the agency. He was then ordered to return to Iran by the CIA, IRNA said.

First Israeli baby born in Qatar

DOHA (AP) — The wife of an Israeli official in Qatar has given birth to a boy, the first Israeli child born in this Gulf state, the Gulf Times reported Monday. Shiri Segev, 27, gave birth here Sunday morning, the English language daily said. She is married to Ilan Segev, deputy chief of Israel's trade mission to Qatar. Mr. Segev, 28, told the paper that his wife had planned to fly to Israel to have the child but that the baby was born a month early. The infant, the Segevs' first child, has not yet been named, the paper said. Mr. Segev said he and his wife plan to take the baby to Israel shortly to celebrate with close relatives and friends. He said he would return before a planned regional economic summit in November.

Iran doubts Baghdad's sincerity in lifting travel ban on Iranians

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran voiced doubt on Monday over Iraq's sincerity in offering to allow Iranians to visit Shiite Islam's holiest sites and asked for serious talks on the subject.

The director of Iran's Pilgrimage Organisation, Hussein Rezai, urged Baghdad to open official negotiations with Tehran to "clarify the conditions" for such visits.

"Iraq has refused our offer to exchange official delegations to discuss the subject," he told newspapers.

Baghdad informed Tehran last week of its decision to lift a 17-year travel ban on Iranians on Sept. 4, the date on which Iraq marks the start of their 1980-1988 war.

The Iraqi interior ministry said later that 3,000 Iranian pilgrims would be allowed to enter Iraq each week. But it warned that the pil-

grims should preserve public order and abide by Iraqi laws, reflecting the tension between the two neighbours who fought a war from 1980 to 1988.

Since 1980, Iranians have been barred from travelling to Iraq, their neighbour to the west, and vice-versa. Only official delegations have been allowed to cross the border.

Najaf and Karbala, south of Baghdad, are home to shrines to the Imams Ali and Hussein, while the capital houses tombs of other Shiite Imams.

Iraq and mainly Shiite Iran have yet to sign a peace treaty, a full nine years after the August 20, 1988, ceasefire in their war.

The question of prisoners of war and those missing in action remains a key stumbling-block.

Key Somali faction leader says airstrip clashes settled

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Somali faction leader Hussein Mohammed Aidede on Monday said fighting among his supporters took place at K-50 airstrip south of the capital Mogadishu but had been resolved, according to his radio station.

Mr. Aidede accused the press of greatly exaggerating casualty figures, stating that only three people had died in the fighting, said to have been caused by a dispute over taxes levied by General Aidede's faction on the narcotic plant, qat, normally imported from Kenya through the airstrip. Qat is chewed by Somalis and populations throughout the Arabian Gulf region as a stimulant.

"Only three people were killed and an undisclosed number wounded in the unfortunate fighting," the radio quoted Mr. Aidede as having said, after visiting the area and resolving the dispute between the Ay and Sa'ad sub-clans of his Habr Gedir clan dominating south Mogadishu.

The radio said Mr. Aidede also sent messages of condolences to the families of the victims.

Travellers arriving in the Somali capital from the conflict area had said that at least nine people died and four were wounded in the fighting.

The K-50 fighting between the supporters of Gen. Aidede — who is regarded by his United

Somali Congress/Somali National Alliance (USC/SNA) faction as "president of Somalia" — was seen as a major setback.

His supporters are currently engaged in fierce fighting with the Resistance Army (RRA) in Baidoa, 250 kilometres southwest of the Somali capital.

Somalia has been without a central government and plunged into clan strife since the ouster in 1991 of strongman Mohammed Siad Barre, which led to major clashes, famine and a U.N. intervention that failed to bring a political settlement in the Horn of Africa nation.

Each country accuses the other of providing cross-border support to rebel groups.

"We think regional peace is important for everybody," Mr. Haj said, adding, "We would like to assure the others that there is nothing to be afraid of

Khartoum puts emphasis on peace in bid to end its isolation

PRETORIA (AFP) — The Islamist regime in Sudan has launched an all-out bid to secure peace in an attempt to end its isolation on the international stage and start rebuilding an economy wrecked by 14 years of civil war and recurring famine.

"We want peace with everybody. Our priority is reconstruction of the country," Sudanese minister for federal affairs, Ali Mohammad Al Haj, said Sunday during a one-day South Africa-brokered summit between Sudan and Uganda.

Each country accuses the other of providing cross-border support to rebel groups.

"We think regional peace is important for everybody," Mr. Haj said, adding, "We would like to assure the others that there is nothing to be afraid of

from Sudan."

Asked why it was so important for Sudan to have peace now, Foreign Minister Ali Osman Mohammad Taha, did not answer, saying merely: "It is our priority."

Mr. Taha said Sudan was "in a state of war" with Uganda which Sudan has accused of occupying a portion of its territory. Its relations with Eritrea have soured badly even though the two sides were on good terms while Eritreans were fighting for independence from Ethiopia.

Relations with Ethiopia itself and with Egypt are little better.

The civil war pitting the Muslim Arabised north against rebels from the south where the population is mainly Christian or animist, has poisoned Khartoum's relations with its neighbours, par-

ticularly Uganda.

The biggest rebel group is the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), led by John Garang, who is seen as the key to any permanent settlement. Colonel Garang met South African President Nelson Mandela here on Thursday but refused to stay for the summit. Mr. Haj said Sudan was "very disappointed" that Col. Garang had decided not to attend and suggested that the rebel leader was "not interested" in peace.

Col. Garang wants guarantees that if Sudan stays a unified state, the present Islamist regime must make way for a secular government with a multi-party system.

Otherwise, he said last week that "amicable divorce may be applicable" and that the south could secede.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:00 Square One TV
15:30 Dog House
15:35 French Programmes
16:00 Album Show
18:10 French Programmes
19:00 News in French
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Coach
20:00 Tilt
20:30 Encounter
21:10 Doc. — Nature of Things
22:00 News in English
22:30 West Beach
23:15 Mini-series

PRAYER TIMES

04:46 Fajr
06:06 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
12:35 Dhuhr
16:11 'Asr
19:05 Maghreb
20:25 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swefeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church
Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel.
661757
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
622366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church
Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel.
771751
Armenian International Church
Tel. 5516245
Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932
Church of Nazareth Tel.
675691
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the
Department of Meteorology
Moderate summer conditions
will prevail with clouds appearing
at low altitudes and winds
northwesterly moderate to
active. In Aqaba, winds will be
northerly moderate and seas
calm.

Amman 16/27
Aqaba 23/35

Deserts 15/32
Jordan Valley 21/36

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 28, Aqaba 36
Humidity readings: Amman 55
per cent, Aqaba 38 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Mazan Nhal 830435
Dr. Foyez Dabbas 759155
Dr. Adnan Zaghloul 898140
Dr. Fakher Bilheisi 552233
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qana 281484
Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Zuhair Al Qadi 906606
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Dept 661111
Civil Defence Immediate
Rescue 630343
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111,
637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Jahat' Amman Maternity
Hospital 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department
..... 630321
Hotel Complaints 603800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (direc-
tory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs 623101
Abdall Telephone Repairs
661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority
..... 815615
Electric Power Company
636381
RJ Flight Information
0853200
Queen Alla Int. Airport 08-
53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre
81381932
Khalifeh Maternity 644281/6
Aklifeh Maternity 642441/2
Jahat' Amman Maternity
Hospital 642362
Mathas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Jalanan, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/25
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alla Hospital
602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart
and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)883323
Zarqa National Hospital
..... (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital
..... (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital
..... (02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital
..... (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital
..... (02)247100

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20 Doha (add) (RJ)
08:05 Damascus (RJ)
08:05 Sanaa (RJ)
09:15 'Al 'Ain, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:20 Bahrain (add) (RJ)
10:25 Beirut (RJ)
10:35 Doha (RJ)
10:40 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
16:00 Muscat (add) (RJ)
17:30 London (RJ)
17:40 Frankfurt (RJ)
17:40 New York, Amsterdam
(RJ)
18:30 Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)
19:30 Kuwait (add) (RJ)
21:45 Cairo (RJ)
01:30 Madrid (RJ)

Other Flights
09:00 Cairo (MS)
11:00 'Al 'Arish (add) (PF)
12:45 Sharigah (add) (GF)
13:00 Riyadh (SV)
14:30 Dubai (EK)
16:40 Istanbul (TK)
18:05 Kiev (6U)

21:30 Tel Aviv (LY)
22:50 Aden (TY)
23:35 Larnaca (CY)
23:45 Amsterdam (KL)
00:55 Bucharest (RO)
01:25 Jakarta (GA)
03:00 Rome (AZ)
04:25 London (BA)

ROYAL WINGS (RW) Flights

08:45 Aqaba (RW)
10:05 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
10:50 Amman (Marka Airport)
(RW)
18:20 Tel Aviv (RW)
19:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
22:20 Aqaba (RW)
23:50 Amman (Marka Airport)
(RW)

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:45 Beirut (RJ)
08:00 Muscat (add) (RJ)
09:00 Amsterdam, New York
(RJ)
12:15 Amsterdam, Montreal,
Toronto (RJ)
12:25 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
13:00 Geneva, Brussels (RJ)
13:10 Paris (RJ)
14:05 London (RJ)

Other Flights
07:45 Amman (Marka Airport)
(RW)
09:15 Aqaba (RW)
10:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
17:45 Amman (Marka Airport)
(RW)
18:55 Tel
(RW)
21:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
22:50 Aqaba (RW)

14:05 Madrid (RJ)
14:15 Kuwait (add) (RJ)
19:00 Cairo (RJ)
19:00 Jeddah (RJ)
21:25 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
22:00 Abu Dhabi (add) (RJ)
22:25 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
23:30 Damascus (RJ)
23:55 Dubai (RJ)
02:25 Madrid (RJ)

Other Flights

04:30 Riyadh (SV)
10:00 Cairo (MS)
12:00 'Al 'Arish (add) (PF)
14:00 Doha, Bahrain (add) (GF)
17:40 Istanbul (TK)
19:05 Kiev (6U)
20:15 Dubai (EK)
22:50 Tel Aviv (LY)
23:50 Aden (TY)
01:55 Bucharest (RO)
02:25 London (GA)
02:30 Amsterdam (KL)
04:00 Athens (OA)
04:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
07:45 Amman (Marka Airport)
(RW)
09:15 Aqaba (RW)
10:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
17:45 Amman (Marka Airport)
(RW)
18:55 Tel
(RW)
21:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
22:50 Aqaba (RW)

Home New



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Communications worksho

PLAY

FILM

EXHIBITIONS

WHAT'S GOING ON

Children's play — How to Recover Our

Book exhibition of the Royal Cultural

ArtZanana and Ben Hammad present a

Exhibition of the Royal Cultural

ArtZanana and Ben Hammad present a

Exhibition of the Royal Cultural

ArtZanana and Ben Hammad present a

Exhibition of the Royal Cultural



PRIME MINISTER VISITS JCCC: Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Monday calls on at the Jordan Civil Consumers Corporation (JCCC) and urges its board to facilitate selling procedures and accept credit cards in the JCCC's vending transactions. Dr. Majali, who was accompanied by Minister of Trade, Industry and Supply Hani Mulki, called for providing goods at reasonable and competitive prices and within reach of all employees (Petra photo)

New controls on taxi industry have owners, union distressed

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Taxi owners are angered by new licensing procedures introduced by the Ministry of Interior, despite assurances that the new regulations will not adversely affect their interests.

The new regulations require that any individual or company wishing to start a new taxi service in Amman must have a minimum capital of JD1 million and at least 75 cars operating within the city limits.

For Zarqa and Irbid, the second and third largest cities in the country, regulations require a capital of JD500,000 and 50 cars. In the rest of the Kingdom, the requirements are a capital of JD250,000 and 25 cars.

"These new regulations will not affect the already operating taxis, but rather our aim is to organise and modernise the transportation operation in the Kingdom," Secretary General of the Ministry of Interior Hashem Sabbagh explained.

In order to organise the transportation operation, taxi drivers will not be allowed to sell their cars to other individuals as taxis, but can sell them as private cars or merge with the companies to be established, Dr. Sabbagh stated.

"This way we can control the taxi operation in the Kingdom, and increase the employment opportunities," Dr. Sabbagh told the Jordan Times.

But according to Abdul Karim Mashaeikh, treasurer and a committee member at the Taxi Owners Union (TOU), some of these regulations are "unfair to owners of the current taxis."

"The regulation which prohibits taxi owners from selling their cars as a public vehicle is unfair and violates citizens' rights," Mr. Mashaeikh said.

He said this will cause financial losses to the owners of these cars, because if a taxi owner wants to sell his car as a private vehicle, its value will drop dramatically, but if the owner sells it as a public vehicle it will maintain a good value.

"These new regulations will only benefit the rich, who will manipulate the taxi industry in Jordan, and will keep the taxi drivers as servants to them all their life," Mr. Mashaeikh said.

Currently, there are almost 11,000 taxis operating in the Kingdom, according to Mr. Mashaeikh.

However, Dr. Sabbagh said that taxi owners have several options which include selling their vehicles to the newly-established businesses or forming a coalition with other taxis to establish a business that meets the new regulations.

"The reason we impose these high amounts of capital and cars is to make sure that individuals or companies wishing to establish this business are serious about it," Dr. Sabbagh said.

Under the new regulations, the new taxis will have a different colour than the currently operating taxis, and each taxi is required to install wireless devices (radios) and be on call 24 hours a day, he added.

Dr. Sabbagh said the new businesses will offer benefits and privileges for taxi drivers, which they were deprived of as taxi owners or drivers working for taxi offices.

"Taxi drivers who join the new business will have health insurance, will be protected by the labour law and will join the social security programme," Dr. Sabbagh said, adding that taxi drivers in the past were deprived from all these benefits.

He stressed that the ministry's step is essential to meet the expected increase in numbers of tourists visiting the area within the next three years.

"We are expecting large numbers of tourists to flock to this region in the year 2000 to celebrate Christmas, and with these new regulations we expect to increase the number of taxis in the Kingdom to meet this influx," Dr. Sabbagh explained.

Muhammad Othman, who works as a taxi driver at an office in Amman, said that he will probably not be affected by the new regulations because he doesn't own a taxi, but said the increase in taxis in the Kingdom will affect the business.

"I am not afraid of the new law, but my worry is that there will be too many taxis which will definitely decrease the income I make," the 35-year-old said.

Dr. Sabbagh concluded by saying: "It is a free market, and we are trying to create competition in order to improve the transportation services in the Kingdom, and it is up to the current taxi drivers to either improve their conditions or remain with their current services."

AMMAN (J.T.) — The first Arab regional workshop on telecommunications policy and regulation opens here today, organised by the Adam Smith Institute of London (ASI), in association with the Jordanian Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), and Price Waterhouse, according to a statement released by ASI.

According to ASI economic adviser Huda Innam, the three-day event will provide an opportunity for participating delegates from Arab countries to learn more about the process of regulating telecommunications in a competitive and privatised market.

She added that leading world experts will share international experience and facilitate discussion and cooperation between Arab countries.

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued Monday approving the Investment Promotion Laws of 1997 granted to non-Jordanians. According to these laws, non-Jordanians are allowed to entirely own a project, or a part of it, except for certain projects in the field of construction, trade and mining. Another decree was also issued approving the scientific research regulations for improving the educational process.

AMMAN (Petra) — A delegation of 80 per cent of the Kingdom's government schools are owned by the ministry, which is trying to raise the ratio to 100 per cent and eliminate the two-shift system that was introduced due to shortages in school buildings.

Ministry of Education's Secretary General Issa Jaradat announced that 70,000 teachers are employed to educate the 1.4 million students who began school Monday, including 122,000 entering the first elementary class. Students in government

International conference to deal with agriculture in dry areas

AMMAN (J.T.) — Under the patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the International Conference on "Agricultural Growth, Sustainable Resource Management and Poverty Alleviation in the Low Rainfall Areas of West Asia and North Africa" will be held in Amman from Sept. 2-6, according to a statement issued by the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA).

The broad goal of the conference is to contribute towards balanced agricultural growth and food security in the eight countries of the Mashreq and Maghreb regions of West Africa and North Africa, through the participatory formulation of strategies for sustainable resource management and poverty alleviation in the low rainfall areas in the context of market liberalisation, the statement said.

In pursuit of this overall goal the conference will:

— Present the principal results and conclusions of the joint ICARDA-IFPRI Mashreq-Maghreb project for the development of sustainable integrated crop/livestock production systems in the low rainfall

areas of West Asia and North Africa, to an informed audience from that region and elsewhere.

— Initiate a discussion, by four subject-matter working groups, of those results and of current government policies.

— Seek to identify the appropriate medium- and longer-term roles of the low rainfall areas in contributing to poverty alleviation and food security.

— Develop a close participatory dialogue amongst policy-makers from the region and donor agencies, on possible solutions and their implications for future economic, social and environmental policies.

— Evaluate consequences of alternative policies and strategies for different types of low rainfall areas, and

— Examine the need for follow-up action to the current M&M project and develop recommendations for future participatory research on the identified issues, according to the statement.

The conference is organised by the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), the Jordanian National Centre for Agricultural Research and Technology Transfer (NCARTT), the International Food Policy Institute (IFPRI), and the German Foundation for International Development (DSE), and co-sponsored by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development

(AFESD).

The conference will bring together about 60 participants from the eight countries of the Mashreq-Maghreb regions; Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia; and from national, regional, and international research institution and organisations working in

the fields of agriculture, natural resource management and policy formulation. The target group for the conference will be key decision-makers in ministries of agriculture, finance, planning, interior and rural affairs, and national senior researchers and advisors, the statement concluded.

HRH Crown Prince Hassan reviews agenda, discusses goals with conference organiser

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Monday conferred with Adel Biltaji, director general of the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), and reviewed the agenda of the International Conference on "Agricultural Growth, Sustainable Resource Management and Poverty Alleviation in the Low Rainfall Areas of West Asia and North Africa," which opens today in Amman.

Prince Hassan and Dr. Biltaji also discussed the role of ICARDA and its activities in promoting food production in dry

areas.

Following the meeting, which was also attended by Minister of Agriculture Mijhem Khrisba, Dr. Biltaji told Jordan Television that the conference, organised by ICARDA, "deals with the effects of economic reforms on agriculture in areas with poor rainfall, and discusses how technology can reduce the negative factors and ensure agricultural development in the badia regions."

"We discussed ICARDA's role in helping people in arid regions utilise the available water resources and introduce new improved strains of

plants and seeds, which can endure dry and hot climates and yield well.

"The discussion also covered means of improving pasture lands in the badia regions of the Near East and North Africa," Dr. Biltaji said in reference to his meeting with the Crown Prince.

"ICARDA has been working with Jordan for the past 20 years through the country's ministry of agriculture, research centres, and universities, employing the most up-to-date scientific methods and techniques in order to promote agricultural development," he remarked.

AMMAN (J.T.) — Today marks the 35th anniversary of the University of Jordan (UJ), which was established in 1962 as the first institution of higher education in the Kingdom.

When it was founded, the university had only one faculty, the Faculty of Arts, offering education to 167 students, and a staff of three full-time instructors and five part-time professors, a statement from the university said.

Now, more than 22,000 students studying in 15 faculties attend UJ, whose staff has grown to 900 teachers and professors, the statement continued.

In addition to 50 programmes at the undergraduate

level and five programmes in vocational training, postgraduate students can now choose from 19 fields of study for the Ph.D. degree, and 62 programmes for the masters degree, the statement announced.

The university's library contains 700,000 publications and subscribes to 945 specialised periodicals, including 320 in Arabic, in addition to housing rare manuscripts, U.N. documents, and rare reference books, according to the statement.

Adjacent to UJ is Jordan University Hospital, which serves as a training institution for students of medicine, dentistry, and nursing.

UJ celebrates 35th anniversary

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AMMAN (J.T.) — A press release issued by the information department of the Federal Republic of Germany placed Jordan among the important nations cooperating with Germany in the field of development.

In recent years, collaboration between the two nations has reached an advanced stage, marked by excellent bilateral relations and the exchange of visits by the two heads of state, the statement noted.

The announcement cited cooperation in water-related matters in particular, stating that Germany was financing a number of important projects, illustrating Bonn's intent to give momentum to the Middle East peace process.

Germany has shown interest in assisting Jordan establish waste water treatment plants, enlarge and modernise the communications sector of its infrastructure, establish small-scale industrial projects, and modernise the tourism sector's facilities, the statement continued.

Other collaborative projects include the harbour at Aqaba, railways, energy production, the development of the Jordan Valley region, the water supply for drinking and irrigation, the banking and industrial sector, agriculture, and the production of veterinary vaccines, the statement said.

According to the press release, Germany is currently helping Jordan implement an irrigation project in the southern Jordan Valley and expand the main Jordan Valley water canal by 14 kilometres.

Germany has recently allocated nearly JD4 million to boost the Kingdom's industrial sector, and nearly JD2.5 million to protect the archaeological sites at the ancient Nabataean city of Petra, the press release concluded.

News In Brief

Royal Decrees Issued Monday

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued Monday approving the Investment Promotion Laws of 1997 granted to non-Jordanians. According to these laws, non-Jordanians are allowed to entirely own a project, or a part of it, except for certain projects in the field of construction, trade and mining. Another decree was also issued approving the scientific research regulations for improving the educational process.

Delegation to attend conference

AMMAN (Petra) — A delegation of 80 per cent of the Kingdom's government schools are owned by the ministry, which is trying to raise the ratio to 100 per cent and eliminate the two-shift system that was introduced due to shortages in school buildings.

Ministry of Education's Secretary General Issa Jaradat announced that 70,000 teachers are employed to educate the 1.4 million students who began school Monday, including 122,000 entering the first elementary class. Students in government

Cooperation between Jordan, Germany reaches advanced stage

BONN (Petra) — A press release issued by the information department of the Federal Republic of Germany placed Jordan among the important nations cooperating with Germany in the field of development.

In recent years, collaboration between the two nations has reached an advanced stage, marked by excellent bilateral relations and the exchange of visits by the two heads of state, the statement noted.

The announcement cited cooperation in water-related matters in particular, stating that Germany was financing a number of important projects, illustrating Bonn's intent to give momentum to the Middle East peace process.

Germany has shown interest in assisting Jordan establish waste water treatment plants, enlarge and modernise the communications sector of its infrastructure, establish small-scale industrial projects, and modernise the tourism sector's facilities, the statement continued.

Other collaborative projects include the harbour at Aqaba, railways, energy production, the development of the Jordan Valley region, the water supply for drinking and irrigation, the banking and industrial sector, agriculture, and the production of veterinary vaccines, the statement said.

According to the press release, Germany is currently helping Jordan implement an irrigation project in the southern Jordan Valley and expand the main Jordan Valley water canal by 14 kilometres.

Germany has recently allocated nearly JD4 million to boost the Kingdom's industrial sector, and nearly JD2.5 million to protect the archaeological sites at the ancient Nabataean city of Petra, the press release concluded.

Telecommunications workshop opens here today

AMMAN (J.T.) — The first Arab regional workshop on telecommunications policy and regulation opens here today, organised by the Adam Smith Institute of London (ASI), in association with the Jordanian Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), and Price Waterhouse, according to a statement released by ASI.

According to ASI economic adviser Huda Innam, the three-day event will provide an opportunity for participating delegates from Arab countries to learn more about the process of regulating telecommunications in a competitive and privatised market.

She added that leading world experts will share international experience and facilitate discussion and cooperation between Arab countries.

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Ministry of Education's Secretary General Issa Jaradat announced that 70,000 teachers are employed to educate the 1.4 million students who began school Monday, including 122,000 entering the first elementary class. Students in government

AMMAN (J.T.) — Today marks the 35th anniversary of the University of Jordan (UJ), which was established in 1962 as the first institution of higher education in the Kingdom.

When it was founded, the university had only one faculty, the Faculty of Arts, offering education to 167 students, and a staff of three full-time instructors and five part-time professors, a statement from the university said.

Now, more than 22,000 students studying in 15 faculties attend UJ, whose staff has grown to 900 teachers and professors, the statement continued.

In addition to 50 programmes at the undergraduate level and five programmes in vocational training, postgraduate students can now choose from 19 fields of study for the Ph.D. degree, and 62 programmes for the masters degree, the statement announced.

The university's library contains 700,000 publications and subscribes to 945 specialised periodicals, including 320 in Arabic, in addition to housing rare manuscripts, U.N. documents, and rare reference books, according to the statement.

Adjacent to UJ is Jordan University Hospital, which serves as a training institution for students of medicine, dentistry, and nursing.

Crimes against women, children highlighted by police report

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A recent study by the Public Security Department (PSD) has indicated that 46 rape cases were reported in Jordan in the first half of this year, with a total of 250 "violent crimes" committed against women.

The study, submitted during a two-day seminar by Col. Abdul Rahman Shara'a, head of the Department of Criminal Investigation at the PSD, indicated that 16 women were killed in the same period.

Nine were killed because of "crimes of honour," two due to "family disputes," two were killed during robbery attempts, and the remaining three were killed for various reasons.

The study, which was made available to the Jordan Times, showed that 14 females were kidnapped in the first seven months of this year and 42 suffered "severe harm."

The study indicated that 98 per cent of the crimes committed in these categories were discovered by police.

The study, submitted during a seminar entitled "Towards a secure Jordanian family, 2000" that was held last Tuesday, indicated that Amman governorate came first among the 12 governorates with 114 crimes against women.

Irbid came next with 38 crimes followed by Zarqa with 26 crimes, Balqa with 14 crimes, Karak with 11, and Mafraq and Jerash with 9 crimes each.

The report showed that 119 crimes were committed against females below 18

years old, 93 crimes were committed against women aged 18-27, 37 crimes against women aged 28-37, 14 crimes against women aged 38-47, and 8 crimes against females above 48 years.

It added that 139 crimes were committed against unemployed females, 15 against women who hold free business, 14 against government employees, 37 against female students, and 66 crimes against household females.

The 1996 figures showed that 63 rape cases were reported in the Kingdom, 42 cases in 1995, 36 cases in 1994, and 29 cases in 1993, according to the report.

Total "violent crimes" against women in 1996 numbered 451, compared to 441 in 1995, 368 in 1994 and 312 in 1993, the study said.

The study reported that 39 women were killed in 1996, compared to 35 in 1995, 35 in 1994, and 41 in 1993.

It showed that 15 murders recorded in 1996 were classified as "crimes of honour," compared to 17 murders in 1995, 21 in 1994, and 32 in 1993.

On the other hand, the study said 347 crimes were committed against teenagers during the first seven months of this year, compared to 793 crimes in 1996, 641 in 1995, 570 in 1994, and 469 in 1993.

It indicated that 23 teenagers were raped during the first seven months of this year, nine were killed, eight were victims of attempted murder, 14 were kidnapped, and 123 received "serious injuries."

The study showed that 139 crimes against teenagers were reported in the capital this year, 56 crimes were reported in Irbid, 52 in Zarqa, 21 crimes in Balqa and Karak each, 12 in Madaba, and nine crimes each in Tafleh and Mafraq.

Of the nine murders of teenagers this year, two were classified as "crimes of honour," three were the result of "immediate dispute," one without reason, and the remaining for several reasons.

It added that 14 teenagers were killed in 1996, compared to 13 in 1995, 12 in 1994, and 13 killed in 1993.

The study emphasised that 18 teenagers were victims of "attempted murder" in 1996, compared to 18 in 1995, 29 in 1994, and 14 in 1993.

During the opening speech of the two-day seminar, His Royal Highness Crown Prince

Hassan said women and children who fall victim to abuse, rape, and violence at home require attention because they are the most at risk.

"These vulnerable groups require our attention and our sympathy, and the police are now creating a unit specialised in dealing with such crimes," he said in his speech, which was read by Minister of Interior Nathir Rashid.

"Society must provide protection to children who fall victim to abuse, but this cannot be achieved without effective and thorough investigation, and in the case of rape and other sexual assault, the victimised women should receive humanitarian treatment based on respect," Crown Prince Hassan added.

WHAT'S GOING ON

PLAY

* Children's play — "How to Recover Our Names" at the Royal Cultural Centre, at 6:00 p.m.

FILM

* "The Road" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Display of caricature drawings by Najji Al 'Ali at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman, until Sept. 6.

* Book exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Sept. 9.

* Works by Basem Al Mahdi at the Jordan Plastic Art Association Gallery, Jabal Weibdeh, until Sept. 8.

* Artizaman and Bani Harnida present a Bani Harnida exhibition (rugs, cushions, runners, wall hangings and more) at Al Baidar Hall of Kan Zaman, until Sept. 20.

Cambodian king prays for peace as fighting continues

SIEM REAP (R) — Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk took part in Buddhist prayers for peace Monday as sporadic shelling continued around the contested northwestern border town of O'smach.

King Sihanouk, who Sunday offered to mediate between his ousted son, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, and the prince's former co-premier.

Mr. Hun Sen, said he wished Cambodia could be peaceful and united.

"The ceremony is to wish that our nation and people stop fighting," King Sihanouk said as he entered a historic royal temple opposite his villa in the centre of Siem Reap.

"It is to let our nation enjoy unity again, as during Angkor rule," he said, referring to the 12th century Cambodian empire that had its capital at the nearby Angkor temple complex.

The king released nine turtles in a Buddhist merit-making ritual and said he hoped the Cambodian people could also find freedom and peace.

Despite the king's repeated pleas for peace, fighting continued in Cambodia's northwest Monday.

Government forces under Hun Sen attacking O'smach fired intermittent shells at royalist troops loyal to Prince Ranariddh, and their Khmer Rouge guerrilla allies dug in on high ground up against the Thai border. Thai army officers monitoring the fighting in Cambodia said.

One Thai soldier was wounded by a stray bullet fired from inside Cambodia Monday and Thai forces were on alert to prevent any slipover of fighting onto

U.N. rights boss in Cambodia defends staff from complaint

PHNOM PENH (R) — The U.N. Special Representative for Human Rights in Cambodia defended his staff's action Monday, but said he would investigate any complaints about U.N. rights workers from Cambodian premier, Hun Sen.

Thomas Hammerberg arrived in Cambodia Saturday for talks with human rights workers and government leaders following calls from Premier Hun Sen for the replacement of some U.N. rights workers.

Mr. Hun Sen said there was insufficient evidence to back up reports from U.N. rights workers that there were widespread human rights violations after Mr. Hun Sen's ouster of his co-premier, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, in July.

"Everything I've seen has been very impressive," Mr. Hammerberg said of the work of the U.N.'s Centre for Human Rights in Cambodia (UNCHR). "I think they've done a good job under difficult circumstances. They have been very careful with information."

Officials at the UNCHR estimated that some 40 supporters of Mr. Ranariddh's FUNCINPEC Party were killed in the aftermath of Mr. Hun Sen's coup.

Most of the victims were allegedly royalist military and intelligence officials as well as their bodyguards, rights workers said.

"What we have said publicly has been based on testimonies not only of one eyewitness but of several eyewitnesses. We corroborate all our information," Mr. Hammerberg said.

"What we've said is that there have been cases of execution of FUNCINPEC military people after they were arrested and these cases that we have information about, we have provided to the government and we have asked the government to look into this."

Mr. Hun Sen said last month he wanted an apology from the United Nations for reporting that members of the opposition had been killed.

Thai soil, they said.

Political analysts said they were not optimistic about the chances of Mr. Hun Sen accepting King Sihanouk's offer of mediation.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hun Sen has prepared a counter-proposal to King Norodom Sihanouk's appeal for a ceasefire and peace talks to end factional fighting in the troubled country, senior officials said Monday.

Mr. Hun Sen, Cambodia's powerful second prime minister and newly named First

Prime Minister Ung Huot are seeking an audience with the ailing 74-year-old monarch — now staying in the northern town of Siem Reap — in order to present their plan, the officials said.

"I can say that the two prime ministers will go to report directly to the king very soon," said Secretary of State for Information Khieu Kanharith, declining to reveal the substance of the plan.

"I (am not calling it a) counter-proposal, but I can

say that the two prime ministers will have an audience with the king and talk about some issues and among those is the king's proposal," he said.

He said he was not yet aware if the king had received or replied to the premier's request for an audience.

Other officials said they believed the audience — which would centre on the counter-proposal — could be held in as little as two days time if the monarch agreed.

King Sihanouk, who had been absent from his country for six months undergoing medical treatment in Beijing, returned home Friday with a plea for an end to hostilities between Hun Sen's forces and those loyal to deposed First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh who was ousted in July.

In a rare press conference Sunday, the king appealed for both sides to stop fighting and reconcile with himself as a referee.

But he noted that Mr. Hun Sen had initially rejected the idea because he did not want the constitutional king — Prince Ranariddh's father — to involve himself in politics or government affairs.

Analysts said it was likely that any proposal from Mr. Hun Sen would require the prince's supporters — now battling to retain control of their besieged last bastion on the Thai border — to lay down their weapons and renounce their struggle.

Prince Ranariddh has rejected similar conditions which were set by Mr. Hun Sen when the prince proposed a cease-fire to honour the return of the king.

MI-24 helicopters attacked strongholds of the former military ruler early in the morning, said the source, contacted from Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on the opposite shore of the Congo River.

Throughout Sunday afternoon, Brazzaville was shaken by heavy gunfire in a fierce battle for control of the city coinciding with the end of Mr. Lissouba's mandate, which has been prolonged by the constitutional court in a move retired General Sassou Nguesso has dismissed as illegal.

The fighting broke out on June 5 when Mr. Lissouba attempted to disarm Gen. Sassou Nguesso's militia ahead of presidential elections scheduled for July 27, but which have since been postponed indefinitely.

The death toll is between 4,000 and 7,000 killed according to both sides. Brazzaville is now little more than a shell-scattered wreck, abandoned by many of its residents who have fled across the river or to other parts of Congo.

Lissouba loyalists first escalated the fighting from artillery battles to air raids in an initial helicopter assault on Aug. 26.

Gen. Sassou Nguesso representatives sent to peace negotiations in Libreville, where Gabonese President Omar Bongo is seeking to mediate a settlement, have announced that they will no longer recognise attempts by Brazzaville Mayor Bernard Kolelas to mediate in the conflict.

This statement followed an announcement Friday that 39 political groups, including that of Mr. Kolelas, had agreed a power-sharing arrangement which would establish a government of national unity and a continuance of existing institutions, such as Mr. Lissouba's presidency.

Gen. Sassou Nguesso's United Democratic Forces refused to sign the accord and sources in his ranks maintain they will not stop until Mr. Lissouba is ousted.

Mr. Lissouba went Saturday to Libreville, where he was taken by Mr. Bongo to the presidential palace to meet Organisation for African Unity and U.N. envoy Mohammad Sahnoun, who is also taking part in the mediation efforts.



Cambodia's King Sihanouk smiles as he is mobbed by an adoring crowd prior to a service at a Buddhist temple near his residence in the northern town of Siem Reap. The King, who returned to the war-torn country last week, said he would pray for peace (Reuters photo)

Congolese president launches air raids against rival

KINSHASA (AFP) — Forces loyal to Congolese President Pascal Lissouba Monday carried out air raids by helicopter over northern parts of the capital Brazzaville held by supporters of his main rival, Denis Sassou Nguesso, an independent source told AFP.

MI-24 helicopters attacked strongholds of the former military ruler early in the morning, said the source, contacted from Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on the opposite shore of the Congo River.

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Indian premier wants to meet Pakistani counterpart in U.S.

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral insisted Monday that he was keen to meet his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif during a visit to the United Nations this month.

Mr. Gujral told parliament, in an apparent reversal of New Delhi's earlier stand: "If an opportunity comes (in New York), I will be happy to meet him," adding that he had held a "useful meeting" with Mr. Sharif in the Maldives in May.

Mr. Gujral's comments contradicted a statement by an Indian government spokesman Sunday that the Indian and Pakistani premiers were unlikely to meet in New York.

Mr. Gujral was first reported as saying on Aug. 30 that he would meet with Mr. Sharif in New York in a bid to improve bilateral relations.

Doubts were raised over the state of bilateral relations after artillery duels between the armies of the two South Asian rivals on their disputed Kashmir frontier late last month.

India said the shelling left 70 Pakistani soldiers dead — a claim denied by Islamabad.

The Economic Times and other newspapers, however, Monday quoted an Indian

official spokesman here as saying that the reports Saturday that Mr. Gujral would meet Mr. Sharif were misleading.

"The prime minister ... had only mentioned about the proposed foreign secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan," the official reportedly said.

"There was no mention of talks at the prime ministerial level."

Mr. Gujral is scheduled to visit New York Sept. 20-22 to address the United Nations. He was originally to go later in the month but postponed the visit at Washington's request to meet U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Mr. Gujral also said Monday that the foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan, bitter South Asian rivals that have fought three wars since 1947, would go ahead with their meeting in New Delhi next month.

"We have suggested the dates to Pakistan. Their response is awaited."

Mr. Gujral said New Delhi desired "strong ties of friendship and cooperation with all neighbouring countries."

He reiterated that he had told the U.S. that he did not wish to discuss Indo-Pakistani relations with Mr. Clinton and wanted to confine the agenda to bilateral issues between New Delhi and Washington.

"There is much to be discussed between the two large democracies," the prime minister added. "I am looking forward to substantive discussions (with Mr. Clinton)."

The foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan are due to meet in New Delhi this month to pursue a dialogue which started in March after a gap of three years.

Meanwhile, police in Pakistan-controlled Azad (Free) Kashmir said Monday Indian mortar fire across the line dividing Kashmir killed a civilian.

They said 26-year-old Mohammad Reezay was killed Sunday evening when what they called an unprovoked barrage of mortar bombs fell on the border village of Leepa, 55 kilometres northwest of the state capital Muzaffargarh.

Military activity along the 720-kilometre line of control has subsided since last month's artillery and mortar exchanges in which at least 13 people were killed on both sides.

India and Pakistan accused one another of provoking the artillery battles ahead of a third round of bilateral peace talks expected to take place in mid-September in New Delhi.

18 drown in Kinshasa rape, shooting tragedy

KINSHASA (R) — Eighteen people drowned in a crowded swimming pool at a resort near the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Sunday following a rape and shooting incident, police said.

Police Inspector Raus Chalwe told Reuters the tragedy at the Nsele Resort, about 40 kilometres outside Kinshasa, occurred when soldiers fired in the air in a bid to save a girl who was being raped.

Panic swept through the pool, packed mainly with students and school children, resulting in the deaths, he said.

"A girl who was being raped called out for help from nearby soldiers who fired into the air and in all 18 people were drowned in the resulting panic," Mr. Chalwe said.

The bodies of those who drowned were brought to the morgue at Kinshasa's General Hospital Sunday evening.

A witness said large numbers of people around the swimming pool jumped in terror into the water when the soldiers opened fire to stop the rape.

"They were shooting in the air and the young people, some of whom couldn't swim, jumped in. There were too many people in the pool and even some of those who could swim drowned," the witness said.

Many inhabitants of Kinshasa are still nervous in the presence of soldiers from President Laurent Kabila's army three months after they toppled Mr. Mobutu government following a seven-month nationwide military campaign.

Soldiers from both Mr. Kabila's forces and Mr. Mobutu's defeated army contribute to chronic insecurity and unrest in the sprawling capital, where incidents of shootings and violence occur on a daily basis.

Options, and cabinet feels this is a rational and compelling reason to visit the United States," the spokesman told Reuters.

"But it doesn't imply that it is necessarily going to affect the present ANZAC frigate option," he added.

The visit is likely to delay an already late review, called the 1996 New Zealand Defence Assessment, which is now expected to be completed by October.

According to the New Zealand Press Association (NZPA), defence officials are due to fly to Hawaii in the next few days to assess

two Oliver Hazard Perry-class frigates.

A political source told Reuters the U.S. frigates were probably on offer at about 140 million New Zealand dollars (\$89 million) each.

The U.S. Navy has said the Perry-class ships were designed to be cost-efficient but "lack the multi-mission capability necessary for modern surface combatants faced with multiple high-technology threats."

NZPA reported the pair on offer are about 15 years old and are of similar size and capability to the ANZAC type, but need 40 more crew.

New Zealand may buy used U.S. frigates

WELLINGTON (R) — New Zealand is to study the possible purchase of two used U.S. frigates as a low-cost alternative to buying new ones from Australia, a spokesman for Prime Minister Jim Bolger said Monday.

Wellington already has an option, valid until the end of November, to buy two more ANZAC frigates for about 500 million New Zealand dollars (\$318 million) each, to add to two already ordered.

"Officials are going to the United States, at the invitation of the American government, to have a look at other

options, and cabinet feels this is a rational and compelling reason to visit the United States," the spokesman told Reuters.

"But it doesn't imply that it is necessarily going to affect the present ANZAC frigate option," he added.

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Karabakh defies Azerbaijan to hold elections

STEPANAKERT (AFP) — Voters in Nagorno-Karabakh headed for the polls Monday for presidential elections in defiance of Azerbaijan, with all three candidates supporting the ethnic-Armenian enclave's separatist drive.

All the candidates have vowed to press for strengthening Nagorno-Karabakh's military capabilities and gaining international recognition of its self-declared independence from Azerbaijan.

Widely expected to win the Caucasus region's second presidential elections since declaring independence from Azerbaijan was Arkady Ghukasyan, foreign minister of the republic since 1993.

Mr. Ghukasyan, 40, who heads Karabakh's negotiating team in talks with Azerbaijan and international mediators, said during his campaign: "All forces are united in the effort to defend independence."

Also running were Artur Tovmazyan, the 35-year-old speaker of parliament, and Boris Arushanyan, a deputy in parliament and a former deputy prime minister.

The 171 polling booths were to open for Karabakh's 89,302 registered voters at 7:00 a.m. (0300 GMT) and close at 8:00 p.m.

Azerbaijan's forces were defeated in a war between 1988 and 1994 that killed 20,000 people and resulted in the flight of the enclave's ethnic-Azeri population. A shaky ceasefire has been in effect since May 1994.

The U.S. State Department has said that a new round of "very serious" negotiations is expected in September over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Oil-rich Azerbaijan has refused to give up sovereignty and branded Monday's election earlier this month as "illegal."

However, Vartan Oskanyan, the deputy foreign minister of Armenia, which has not recognised Nagorno-Karabakh but remains its main lifeline, said the elections would not harm the negotiating process.

"Only an elected authority can hold negotiations in the name of the people. Azerbaijan and the international community should understand that Nagorno-Karabakh is a

political and economic independent entity," he said. He called Azerbaijan's protests "a problematic stance which hurts the negotiating process."

The election was being held to replace Robert Kocharyan, the main architect of the fight against Azerbaijan. He was first made head of state in 1994, elected president in 1996, then named Prime Minister of Armenia proper in March this year.

Mr. Ghukasyan's candidacy has received the support of the strongly nationalist Dashnaksutyun Party, which was banned in Armenia by President Lev Ter-Petrosyan who dubbed it a "terrorist" organisation.

However, Mr. Ghukasyan denied he would have difficult relations with Karabakh's backers in Armenia, saying: "Despite this party having problems with the Armenian authorities, I cooperate with everybody. To me someone's party affiliation has no importance if he is a patriot and thinks about his country."

Arkady Sarkisyan, a 47-year-old resident of Stepanakert, said he would vote for Mr. Ghukasyan because "he has already worked a long time as foreign minister and has gained a great deal of diplomatic experience."

"I will vote for Mr. Ghukasyan," said student Nina Akacharyan. "He is a motivated person and knows what the Karabakh people want. He heads the delegation to the talks and he is known very well both in Azerbaijan and among the mediators."

Grigory Ogandzhanyan, chairman of the Electoral Commission, said there were 40 international observers, including from Armenia, France, Georgia, Germany, Russia and Switzerland.

He said they were independent observers, or representatives from non-governmental organisations.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe was invited, but was "unlikely to come," he said.

To win, a candidate must get more than 50 per cent of the vote.

China heaps praise on Jiang ahead of congress

BEIJING (R) — China has praised President Jiang Zemin ahead of a crucial Communist Party congress, crediting the top leader with steering the nation into its best period in history but citing problems such as graft and unemployment.

Mr. Jiang, who is also chairman of the ruling Communist Party, had led the nation into stability and prosperity since he took over the reins from late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, who died last February, Xinhua said in an overnight commentary.

"China's reform and opening-up drive entered a crucial period following Deng's death, with a number of deep-rooted contradictions surfacing," Xinhua said.

However, Mr. Jiang and the party had overcome the difficulties, it said without elaborating on the contradictions.

Mr. Jiang's achievement

had "fully displayed the ability of China's collective leadership to exercise effective control over the overall situation," Xinhua quoted a political analyst in Beijing as saying.

A galloping economy, ethnic unity and social stability were some of the feathers in Mr. Jiang's cap since he took over from Deng, but the new leadership would have to tackle many other thorny issues, Xinhua quoted analysts as saying.

"Unemployment, the low efficiency of the national economy as a whole and corruption are posing the most serious challenges," Xinhua quoted one political analyst as saying.

China's official urban jobless rate was three per cent at the end of 1996, but officials have said the actual figure was closer to eight per cent and is set to climb in the next few years as the ailing state sector sheds millions of redundant workers.

Many Chinese have complained that Deng's economic reforms have resulted in rampant official corruption and Mr. Jiang, fearing graft could threaten the party's grip on power, has moved to crack down on officials who barter political pull for economic gain.

Xinhua heaped praise on Mr. Jiang, hand-picked as Deng's heir, as improving on the legacy of his mentor, whose market-style reforms propelled China from socialist backwater to economic powerhouse.

"The fact that China is in the midst of its best period in history indicates that the Communist Party of China's collective leadership with Mr. Jiang Zemin at the core has established firm and strong leadership over the party and the country," it said.

Xinhua's comments came less than two weeks before the start of the party's 15th congress, to be held on

Sept. 12 and in which China's political elite are expected to reshuffle their ranks and chart new policies for the world's largest country.

Mr. Jiang, 70, has moved to shore up his position as Deng's heir and fend off leftist opposition to China's capitalist-style reforms, and state media frequently urges the nation to rally behind Mr. Jiang as the core of the party leadership.

Party sources have said the congress, the first meeting in nearly two decades without Deng, is set not only to endorse Deng's economic reforms but to push for an even faster pace of change.

In the run-up to the meeting, Mr. Jiang has called for greater vigilance against leftism, and analysts say he plans to push through a blueprint for bold but belated reforms that could force thousands of flagging state firms toward bankruptcy.

Gen. Sassou Nguesso's United Democratic Forces refused to sign the accord and sources in his ranks maintain they will not stop until Mr. Lissouba is ousted.

Mr. Lissouba went Saturday to Libreville, where he was taken by Mr. Bongo to the presidential palace to meet Organisation for African Unity and U.N. envoy Mohammad Sahnoun, who is also taking part in the mediation efforts.

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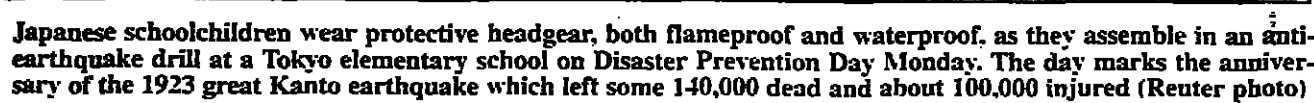
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TOKYO (R) — Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto donned a khaki uniform and took the lead Monday as some 7.5 million people in Tokyo and surrounding regions held annual earthquake drills.

The drills, held every year on the anniversary of the deadly 1923 great Kanto earthquake, assume a major quake has hit the Tokyo metropolitan area, home to 12 million people.

Japan, where thousands of minor tremors occur daily and several big earthquakes hit every year, has beefed up disaster preparation and response since an earthquake devastated the western city of Kobe in January, 1995, killing 6,000 people.

A slow central government response to the Kobe earthquake and its resulting fires, and poor communication between Tokyo and the affected regional governments, were cited by experts as adding to the loss of life and increased property damage.

To overcome such glitches, Monday's drills focused on speedy information gathering, with the prime minister's official residence serving as the crisis management centre.

After morning warnings by seismic experts of irregular movements in the Earth's crust along the volcanic zone off the Pacific Coast southeast of the capital, Mr. Hashimoto held a mock news conference to inform his nation that disaster had struck at noon.

It was at 11:58 a.m. on Sept. 1, 1923, that the great Kanto earthquake struck, killing more than 140,000 in Tokyo and its vicinity. Kanto is the region of eastern Japan surrounding the capital.

"Roads, railroads and other public facilities are damaged, and fires have broken out in a number of places. Buildings have collapsed over a wide area and there are dead or missing," said Mr. Hashimoto, dressed in a khaki uniform.

He then boarded a helicopter to join mock rescues and other drills in the nearby port city of Yokohama, assumed to be badly damaged by the quake.

In schools throughout Japan, most of which reopened Monday after summer recess, children practised evacuating classrooms or ducking under their desks.

The drills are expected to involve 12 million people — one-tenth of Japan's population — by the end of disaster prevention week Friday.

Medieval monks used anaesthetics—Scottish scientists

WASHINGTON (R) — Physicists said Monday they had found evidence of a new kind of subatomic particle, which they said helped validate the core theory of modern physics.

The new particle, an exotic meson, was found after five years of slamming atoms together in a particle accelerator, they reported in the journal *Physical Review Letters*.

"To find evidence of a particle that has never been detected before, and one that's so important to our understanding of elementary physics, is hugely satisfying," said Suh-Ork Ching of Brookhaven National Laboratory in upton New York, who worked on the project.

The experiment, known as E832, involved hitting liquid hydrogen with an 18-billion-electron-volt particle beam in a multi-particle spectrometer.

"This is a very important observation," said Ted Barnes of the University of Tennessee and Oak Ridge National Laboratory, who commented on the findings.

Theorists have predicted the existence of exotic hybrid mesons, which contain both quarks and gluons, since the late 1970s, but E832 may have found the "smoking gun" for their existence. It's a benchmark that will set the mathematical scales for future experiments and study.

Sub-atomic particles known as baryons and mesons are made up of even smaller bits called quarks and antiquarks. They are held together by gluons.

They are too small to actually see, so scientists test their existence by using the particle accelerators.

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong's leader Tung Chee-hwa, in office for two months, steps out this week on a global diplomatic offensive to woo friends in Asia, North America, Europe.

Mr. Tung's first foray Wednesday will be to Malaysia and Singapore, which embrace Hong Kong's ex-British colonial heritage.

Later in the month he will visit the United States to try to convince President Bill Clinton and congressional leaders that Hong Kong has renounced a free and open international city since it became a quasi-autonomous capitalist region of China on July 1.

Early next month, Mr. Tung is scheduled to make a similar trip to Japan, then to Europe for his first visit to Hong Kong's former colonial master, Britain, and to the European Union in Brussels, to seek visa concessions for Hong Kong residents.

On the cards soon afterwards, diplomats said, was a joint visit to Canada with China's President Jiang Zemin for a summit of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum.

The Beijing-appointed Tung's first two months in office have been marked by an atmosphere of all change but no change.

No dramatic political upheavals have taken place. Diplomatic squabbles between Britain and China have petered out.

Mr. Tung's popularity has climbed steadily in the polls to an 82 per cent approval rating, ahead of all party political figures.

But his government is far less popular in the polls than the former colonial administration of then Governor Chris Patten.

Savaged by the media before the handover, Mr. Tung still gets an uncompromising press because of his steps to slash democracy and labour rights and to introduce an election law that would sideline pro-democracy parties.

But this will not bother his discussion partners in Malaysia and Singapore, staunch defenders of "Asian values" and no friends of the free press or full-blown democracy.

They will be preoccupied with the South East Asian financial markets crisis that has seen regional currencies and shares take a dramatic nosedive after speculative attacks in recent weeks.

Hong Kong's concern for the crisis was underlined when it coughed up \$1 billion for a Thai financial rescue package.

On Mr. Tung's first stop in Kuala Lumpur, he will meet Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad, who lashed out at the West and at U.S. financier George Soros last month, accusing them of conspiring to cause South East Asia's markets crisis.

Mr. Soros has denied this.

Mr. Tung has endorsed Mr. Mahathir's call to change a United Nations human rights declaration to allow more inputs from developing nations. "I am sympathetic to this argument. I really am," Mr. Tung said recently.

Mr. Tung will move on to Singapore Thursday to meet Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and elder statesman Lee Kuan Yew, who he has often listed as one of his most admired leaders.

Mr. Tung has expressed approval of Singapore's noted social security schemes, education facilities and government-provided housing estates, which he plans to tour during his visit.

Singapore has been eyed by people in Hong Kong either as a potential rival where companies might shift their operations if Hong Kong went badly awry after the handover, or as a post-colonial development model to follow.

Singapore's consul-general here, Chan Heng-Wing, however, said that despite Mr. Tung's admiration for Mr. Lee, Mr. Tung was not trying to reshape his territory on Singapore lines.

"The political imperatives of the two cities are quite different. We are a multi-racial city and a multi-racial population. I think it's not so easy to make such a comparison," Mr. Chan told a Hong Kong newspaper last weekend.

BANJA LUKA, Bosnia (R) — Bosnian Serb hardliners held on to key police stations in the northeast and east and President Biljana Plavsic said infiltrators from Yugoslavia were helping them.

Western officials said Sunday that nationalist hardliners opposed to Ms. Plavsic remained in control of police forces in the contested towns of Bijeljina and Brcko, where an angry mob attacked U.S. soldiers last week, injuring two.

The soldiers, part of the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia, had been trying to install officers sympathetic to Ms. Plavsic to run the Brcko police station, but were taken by surprise by an angry mob throwing petrol bombs and bricks.

Ms. Plavsic, speaking to reporters after a meeting with U.S. diplomat Robert Farrand, said criminals had been bussed in from neighbouring Yugoslavia for the riot in Brcko.

"To take such irresponsible action there, driving in criminals from Yugoslavia ... and then put women and children up front as shields

is insane and amoral for any normal man," said Ms. Plavsic, who did not identify who she thought was responsible.

Ms. Plavsic, who has Western support, is locked in a struggle for control of Bosnian Serb state institutions with the hardliners loyal to indicted war criminal and former Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic.

Mr. Farrand, the Western-appointed supervisor for Brcko, a town whose fate was left open under the Dayton Peace Accords ending the Bosnian war, also said outsiders were involved but stopped short of naming a country.

"We are absolutely certain that those who organised this, those who took part in this contrived violence, were from outside Brcko," he said after talks with Ms. Plavsic in her Banja Luka headquarters.

"When I say outsiders, I'm not only talking about persons from outside Brcko, I'm talking outside Bosnia-Herzegovina. By that, I mean persons from another country."

Asked if he was referring

to Yugoslavia, he said: "Draw your own conclusions."

Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, chief patron of the Bosnian Serbs, has been under severe pressure from the international community, and the U.S. in particular, to back Ms. Plavsic but so far has refused to do so.

The Western officials familiar with the situation in the east said hardliners were maintaining roadblocks in a 500 square metre area around the main police station in Bijeljina, another town where SFOR troops tried to change the police command.

The Karadzic loyalists were having to rely on strong-arm tactics to retain their authority in towns in the northeast and eastern areas of Serb territory, the officials said.

The officials said young men had been bussed into Bijeljina last week to help man roadblocks against NATO peacekeeping troops.

U.N. police monitors had resumed parolling in Brcko, where their offices were ransacked in the riots and more than 20 vehicles

destroyed.

But international organisations were keeping a low profile and had evacuated their personnel after the violence that erupted last week.

Brcko is located at a bottleneck between the eastern and western parts of Serb-held Bosnia and its fate was so sensitive it was left unresolved at the Dayton peace conference in 1995.

Hardliners loyal to Mr. Karadzic have been fighting to retain influence over the police, state television and the army and have been linked by Western controls and supervision that will be in place for municipal elections in two weeks' time.

Aleksa Buha, the acting president of the hardliners' SDS party, said in Brcko that the party "will not take part in the elections unless the electoral regulations and conditions are changed," a report by the hardliner-controlled Serbian Republic News Agency said.

He accused the international community of double standards in the registration of voters and said electoral regulations had been tailored and rewritten.

TAIPEI (AFP) — Taiwan's newly inaugurated Premier Vincent Siew said Monday he was ready to reopen talks with Beijing to improve strained relations between the two rival nations.

Mr. Siew, who was officially appointed Thursday, called for patience, tolerance and goodwill between the two longtime rivals.

He said Taipei was ready to negotiate with Beijing whenever China decided to resume top-level talks, which were suspended in mid-1995 after the Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui made a trip to the United States.

"If the two sides of the Taiwan Strait would exercise patience and tolerance, based on sincerity and goodwill, the development of bilateral relations would be more stable and positive," Mr. Siew told a press conference after his cabinet

SEOUL (R) — South Korea's ruling party will seek an amnesty for former Presidents Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae-Woo, who were jailed for mutiny, treason and corruption, a party spokesman said Monday.

The Supreme Court in April upheld a lower appeals court decision last December to commute Mr. Chun's death sentence to life in jail and Mr. Roh's twenty-two-and-a-half-year prison term to 17 years for their roles in a 1979 coup and an army massacre in 1980.

Lee Hoi-Chang, candidate of the ruling New Korea Party for presidential elections in December, will formally ask President Kim Young-Sam Thursday to grant an amnesty for Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh soon, he said.

"The move is part of the party's efforts to promote grand unity," he said.

Party officials said Mr. Lee was expected to ask Mr. Kim to announce a clemency order for the former presidents within two weeks.

Political analysts said Mr. Lee was trying to boost his chances at future presidential elections by appealing to conservatives as he battled a controversy involving his two sons, who were exempted from a mandatory 30-month military service on grounds that they were underweight.

Mr. Lee's popularity has plunged since opposition parties alleged last in July that the sons deliberately lost weight to avoid the service. Mr. Lee has denied the allegation.

Mr. Lee, a former Supreme Court judge, had been widely tipped to win in the elections but recent popularity polls have shown Mr. Lee is now lagging behind Kim Dae-Jung, candidate for the main opposition National Congress for New Politics.

One survey published by the leading Dong-All Bo newspaper showed Mr. Kim won support from 24.8 per cent of 2,200 South Koreans polled in the past week, while Mr. Lee secured 16.2 per cent. Nearly 41 per cent polled were undecided.

The remainder backed candidates of two minor opposition party candidates — former Prime Minister Kim Jong-Pil and Seoul Mayor Cho Soon.

Another newspaper poll showed Kim Dae-Jung leading with 32.0 per cent support against Mr. Lee's 24.4 per cent.

Mr. Kim Dae-Jung, who has been trying to erase an image as a radical, said last week he would also support an amnesty for Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh.

A group of South Korean lawyers Monday issued a statement, "strongly opposing" amnesty for Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh.

"Politicians should stop the unprincipled attempt to grant amnesty for the two convicted former presidents simply to gain votes," it said.

The sentences against the ex-presidents relate to a coup that thrust them army General Chun to power and an army massacre in the southwestern city of Kwangju that crushed democratic opposition and left deep scars on the nation.

They were also convicted in last year's "trial of the century" of amassing hundreds of millions of dollars in slush funds from businessmen while in office.

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Hollywood celebrities joined the outcry Sunday over paparazzi photographers that some blamed for the death of Britain's Princess Diana in a Paris car crash.

The 36-year-old Princess of Wales, millionaire Dodi Al Fayed, 41, and their driver were killed when their speeding car hit a concrete pillar and careened off a Paris tunnel as they were trying to shake photographers on motorcycle.

Film star Tom Cruise said in a telephone call to CNN, "I've actually been in that same tunnel being chased by paparazzi, and they run lights and chase you and harass you the whole time and it happens all over the world."

Hollywood publicist Michael Levine meanwhile pledged to lead an effort to change laws to appropriately punish what he called "the criminal behavior of stalking tabloid journalists."

"What these photographers did in Paris ... was to contribute to murder," said Mr. Levine.

Mr. Levine, who once represented Hollywood producer Fayed and celebrities including Michael Jackson, expressed outrage at the "totally unnecessary loss of innocent life."

"I have witnessed the behavior of the tabloids go from obnoxious to criminal in the last few years," said Mr. Levine. "I'm frankly surprised that something like this didn't happen sooner."

"This problem cries out for an economic in addition to a criminal solution," said Mr. Levine. "If media owners understand that new laws could hold them responsible for their agents' gross behavior, things will change pronto."

Los Angeles psychologist Robert Bunker- word said the public's insatiable appetite for celebrity coverage may ultimately be responsible for photographers' acts of excess and the ensuing tragic incidents.

"We have become a society of voyeurs, gobbling up as much scandal as we are fed," he said. "It is time to kick this perverted habit before others are killed."

Paparazzi have long plagued celebrities in Hollywood and around the world. Many stars say they had to take evasive action to protect their privacy.

Actor Alec Baldwin was cleared of assault charges by a sympathetic jury after he decked a photographer stalking him and his wife Kim Basinger as they were returning last year from the hospital with their newborn to their home.

The late Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis had to go to court to get a restraining order to keep a particularly persistent photographer outside a certain distance from her.

When Madonna gave birth, photographers stalked the hospital and kept a round-the-clock vigil at her Los Angeles home hoping to get what was called the first "million dollar" picture of the baby.

Named after a photographer character in Fellini's 1960 film, *La Dolce Vita*, the paparazzi profession is sometimes lucrative, as witnessed by the estimated \$5 million pocketed by Italian photographer Mario Brenna for his pictures of Diana kissing Fayed several weeks ago.

But editors of tabloids scrambled for the moral high ground following the tragedy.

Stephen Coz, editor of the National Enquirer, one of the most popular U.S. tabloids, called for a boycott of pictures by photographers who were following the car that crashed in Paris and killed Diana, and said the photos were being offered for \$1 million.

"There's a difference between observing celebrities and hunting them down," Mr. Coz told NBC Television. "It's something that the Enquirer takes a strong stance against. We had nothing to do with those motorcycle-chasing paparazzi, and the world press should not buy these photos."

Mr. Coz blamed the events on a small contingent of what he called "stalkarazzi," who should be shunned by all media.

Britain's best selling Sunday tabloid, the News Of The World, said it had refused to buy photos of Diana trapped in the mangled limousine after the crash.

Seven photographers in Paris were detained for questioning in connection with their role in the incident.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975
جريدة الجordanية المستقلة

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University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

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Telex: 21471 ALRAI JO

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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

Tragedy speaks volumes

AS IS clearly evident from the letters published on this page, and the numerous phone calls the newspaper received yesterday, many of our readers blamed the press, especially the sensational tabloids, for the tragic and untimely loss of Diana, Princess of Wales. Those who wrote and called pointed to the poor taste involved in using the wrong picture of the late princess in our newspaper, on the back page of yesterday's issue, and rightly so. For Princess Diana should not be remembered only as the glamorous person she was, and certainly not on the day following her shocking death, but for her humanitarian work and significant achievements with which she won the hearts of the international community.

At a time when the whole world mourns her loss, the accusing finger that has been pointed at the kind of press which hounded her from the day she started her public life all the way to her death, has to be recognised. The problem of the so-called "paparazzi" and their continued trespassing on privacy have been debated for decades, but the tragedy has brought the whole issue of "yellow" journalism, once again, to the fore.

But blame should not be shouldered by the press alone. For one thing, and as His Majesty King Hussein pointed out yesterday, most journalists are responsible people and the press as such cannot always be the culprit in people's woes. Secondly, if it was not for the great popular demand for coverage of her news and the need for celebrities generally to be seen and read about in the media, there would not be such a big price to pay as in this case.

The paparazzi, whose wild actions we do not condone, would not run after the pictures if they were not worth a tremendous amount of money. The price paid for sensational or revealing photos is only a fraction of what the publication makes after selling a newspaper with exclusivity rights of what the public wants to see. Again, most of us are against the commercialisation of the press. But, evidently, various political systems and structures cannot be said to have found the right alternative, the right balance, having looked for an easy way for so long.

The demand for tightening the ropes on laws governing the press are rightfully emotional at this time, especially if proven to be behind Diana's death. It is not necessarily the solution, however. It must be remembered that Sunday's tragedy occurred in France, a country whose laws governing privacy are amongst the toughest in the world. Additionally, if strict laws were to bring a stop to investigative reporting, not only public figures would benefit from such laws, but criminals as well.

Diana, as a woman and a princess, was not able to remove with her bare hands landmines that have maimed and decapitated civilians all over the world. It was the media which followed Diana everywhere that brought the problem out into the open. It was the media that published her photograph holding the hand of an AIDS victim bringing to the attention of people everywhere the humanitarian aspect of the disease. If it was not for the media, we would have known little about what the princess represented and stood for. As the world debates the reasons behind her tragic loss, it pays to wait and hear from her bodyguard, who survived the crash, his version of what actually happened, particularly that news filtering from France yesterday spoke of the alcohol level in the driver's blood being significantly higher than permitted.

Under any and all circumstances, the untimely death of Princess Diana cannot but be a real loss, not only for her children and family but also for all those who believed, and still do, in the necessity of the humanitarian work that she so admirably undertook and carried out, often under difficult conditions.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily strongly criticised the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for what he said was its failure to exert sufficient efforts to raise funds from the donor nations to cover the deficit in its 1997 fiscal budget. UNRWA should make it clear to the donor nations and the United Nations that it stands responsible for the agency which was created by the U.N. organisation under Resolution 194 of 1951 and should continue to cater to the refugees' needs until their problem has been resolved, said Izzeddin Manasrah. The writer said the refugees' problem has not been solved, neither have they been offered compensation or the option to return to their homeland. By resorting to Arab countries for help the agency is perhaps trying to transform the Palestinian refugee problem into a regional issue, he added. Under the austerity programme adopted by the agency, in view of the \$20 million deficit for this year, refugee schoolchildren will be paying tuition fees, hospitalisation programmes will be reduced to a minimum and appointment of teachers will be frozen, noted the writer. He suggested that the Jordanian government allow the refugees in Jordan to stage a demonstration during a meeting by donor nations in Amman this month to express their protest over the agency's reduction of its services and its shirking of responsibilities towards them.

A WRITER for Al Dustour criticised Abdul Hadi Majali, the former deputy from Karak, for announcing that he has been nominated to run for the coming elections on behalf of the Majali clan. Oreib Rintawi said that Mr. Majali, who heads the National Constitutional Party, should have been nominated by his own party, whose programmes must be geared towards serving the whole country and not a limited clan or group. We have been shocked to hear this announcement because it is not possible for the candidate to reconcile the clan's demands with those of the nation as a whole and because there will be no meaning left for the political party he represents, added the writer. He said that by siding with one clan, a candidate can by no means seek reforms that benefit the society as a whole because in this case, the candidate will be inclined to favour tribal links over all other social and civic considerations, according to the writer.

The View from the Fourth Circle

A Jewish paradox's co-protagonists and joint victims

By Rami G. Khouri

TEL AVIV, Israel — By coincidence, I was here in Israel for a few days attending to family matters during the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration of August 29, 1897, which marked the formal launch of modern political Zionism. While here, I could not help but observe Israeli society with a critical eye, trying to see it from both the Israeli and Arab perspectives. I stayed with cousins in old Jaffa, and met regularly with both Jewish and Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel, usually in relaxed, non-confrontational contexts that provided valuable opportunities for serious discussion and mutual learning. I came away from the experience with the following observations:

1. The complexity and continuing transformation of Israeli society require that the Arab World see, study and address it with far more depth and sophistication than has been the case to date. Whatever Israel is, it is not monolithic or homogeneous. On all levels — demography, race, ethnicity, religiosity, ideology, lifestyle, social values — the Israeli society is continuously changing and is becoming characterised by ever greater fragmentation and compartmentalisation among its citizens. The often heard statements that "all the Jews" believe this or that, or that "all Israelis" want this or that seem to me factually wrong and politically immature.

You have to spend only a few hours walking through the streets of this city to appreciate two important phenomena: a) the rich, often eccentric, almost dizzying variety of citizens of the Israeli state who are easily categorised into a long list of indigenous dichotomies, such as secular-Orthodox, Ashkenazi-Sephardi, Jewish-Muslim-Christian-Arab, rich-poor, Israeli-immigrant, traditional-modern, Israel-occupied Palestinian, liberal-conservative, Labour/Left-Likud/Right, hawkish-dovish, and several others; and, b) the peculiar brand of rather cold pluralism and tolerance that allows these very different groups of people to coexist, to live and work together, in a single state and society, often without much warmth or contact with one another, or any significant inclination to bridge their large differences.

My impression from several recent, brief visits to Israel is that the only thing that all Israelis seem to agree on is the very general commitment to continuing the quest for a negotiated political resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the need for security from terror attacks, and the desire for mobile telephones. These three attributes, however, could just as easily describe Jordanians as Israeli society; human security and mobile phones, after all, seem to be universal rather than peculiarly Israeli. Despite our intense national conflict with Israel and its aggressive, frequently criminal, behaviour vis-à-vis the Palestinians and Arabs, we are more likely to bring Israel to a negotiated, mutually acceptable, political settlement if we understand and deal with the realities of the Israeli state rather than with our imagined perceptions of the Israeli state. The same is true in the other direction, of course, but that is up to them to admit in this difficult journey of mutual discovery.

2. Among the realities of Israel that I have perceived,

especially on this 100th anniversary of its core, defining Zionist ideology, is an always perplexing juxtaposition of strengths and weaknesses, of achievements and failures, which become more clear while visiting Israel. The greatest achievement of Israel for its Jewish citizens is their survival and what they see as their historic reconstitution as a sovereign state (however differently this process is seen by the Palestinian and Arab victims of Israeli statehood). With statehood have come corresponding gains enjoyed by Jewish Israelis, but slightly less by Palestinian and other Israeli nationals, such as quality education, vocational training, employment opportunities, health care and social services, business promotion, high-tech creativity, and other such dimensions of effective statehood. The vitality of the Israeli economy, the depth of its science and research capabilities, the dynamism of its cultural expressions, the efficacy of its infrastructure and other such aspects of Israeli life are equally significant achievements that cannot be ignored by Arabs or others who engage Israel politically or otherwise. Yet, all these positive aspects of Israel are invisible and neutralised for the Arab World because of Israel's political behaviour. Har Homa/Labal Abu Ghneim does not only encircle Jerusalem; it also encircles and closes the eyes, minds and hearts of Arabs who are trying hard to achieve a fair peace with Israel. It blinds us to other realities.

The weakness, perhaps even the tragedy and failure, of Israeli statehood seem to me to fall ironically within the realm of security for the Jews that was the primary motivation for Zionism a century ago. After the mobile phone, the next most prevalent instrument a visitor notices in Israel is the gun; and the two most prominent attitudes that strike a visitor are the black garb of very religious Orthodox Jews and the omnipresent uniforms of police, army and other security personnel (here is a double irony to ponder: religious and security attire are also the two most prevalent forms of attire in most Arab countries, but that is a subject for another time). Israeli statehood and Jewish sovereignty have not translated into Israeli and Jewish long-term, basic security in the same way that statehood and security have provided long-term safety and peace of mind for, say, the people of the Netherlands or France.

The Israeli writer Amotz Asa-El wrote in a Jerusalem Post column on August 29 that, "it is a perplexing paradox that the only place where Jews are routinely murdered is Israel." The paradox is real and problematic, perhaps even tragic, but it is certainly not perplexing from where we see it. It is very logically explained, however painful for Jews and Israelis to accept. Jews are routinely murdered in Israel because the Jewish people's rebirth of their Israeli state and its continued strength and development have taken place on the land and at the expense of the national rights of the Palestinian people. Until this fundamental, and really very simple, problem is resolved, the Jewish state will probably continue to experience mega-security against neighbouring armies and armaments, but will also suffer interminable micro-insecurity in the form of attacks against its people and soldiers wherever they may be. Zionism's century, in this respect, has

transformed the nature and place but not the fact of Jewish vulnerability and insecurity.

3. Israel's interaction today with its Arab neighbours aptly captures both the achievements and failures of the Zionist century. In Cairo, the Israeli Druze citizen Azzam is sentenced to a long prison term for spying for Israel, highlighting the rising trend of anti-Israeli sentiment in Egypt. In Aqaba, Jordan, the transport ministry of Israel and Jordan sign an agreement launching a four-month trial use of Aqaba airport by Israeli civilian planes. In southern Lebanon, in lands occupied or subjugated by the Israeli army, Israeli soldiers now die at a regular rate than a sporadic rate. In Palestine, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators intermittently face one another in an impressive display of political rationality, while Israeli and Palestinian troops intermittently face one another with rifles cocked in a dramatic display of the human penchant to resort to violence in moments of fear. On the Syrian front, Israelis and Syrians continue to seek openings towards a future negotiated settlement by dwelling on the diplomatic offers and commitments of the recent past. The century is over, but the glass is only partly full.

To a biased Arab visitor like myself, Israel on the cusp of its modern political inception is both intriguing and irritating, impressive and depressing, full of hope and tragedy. Many in Israel now speak of "post-Zionism", arguing that Zionism has accomplished its basic mission of providing the Jewish people with security, and cultural and national expression, in their own state in what they define as their ancestral homeland. Many in Palestine and the Arab World still suffer the direct or secondary consequences of the cruel combination of Zionism's successes and the deficiencies of the modern Arab political order — expulsion, occupation, exile, vulnerability, detention, statelessness, death, disability, colonisation, national fragmentation, disenfranchisement, autocracy, poverty, dependency, corruption and other such ills. For most of us in the Arab World, Zionism's century is neither over nor triumphal, but rather is a challenge to us to do two things better in the coming century than we did in the past century: a) to understand, engage and ultimately coexist with the Jewish presence in this region in a manner that is fair and acceptable to both of us, on terms of national and moral equality among Israelis and Arabs, and, b) to build our own societies in a diligent, productive manner that is fair and acceptable to all of our own people, shackled neither by the hallucinogenic frenzy of imagined super foes or the demeaning betrayal of fantastic excuses for national mediocrity and failure, both of which have plagued many Arabs in modern times.

Zionism's centennial is an opportunity to see our Middle Eastern region with more clarity and realism, to damn the damnable and praise the praiseworthy in both quarters of our shared neighbourhood. There are no absolutes in this land, no homogeneity in our peoples, only simple and obvious mutual injustices from the past that must be redressed by the mercy and relative fairness of us on both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict who are simultaneously co-protagonists and joint victims of this messy century.

Closures: Security boost or ticking bomb?

By Jon Immanuel

The article below is reprinted from The Jerusalem Post.

IT IS a routine response to nearly every terror attack. A suicide bomber blows himself to smithereens in an Israeli bus, marketplace or café, and a closure is clamped on all Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Palestinians resent it because about 100,000 of them are kept from earning livelihoods in Israel. But the Israeli public feels a tad more secure, believing that security forces will have an easier time keeping terrorists away.

Israeli and Arab experts are beginning to question the closure's effectiveness. Observers point out that the closure often doesn't even work since many Palestinians manage to bypass roadblocks, sometimes even under a soldier's gaze. Ironically, the closure may be hitting hardest at the moderate Palestinians, those who passed security muster to obtain work permits. Many tend to obey the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and stay home because they would rather avoid risking a run-in with a border policeman and end up having their permit pulled.

Yet the Palestinians who pose a greater threat to Israel — those never issued work permits for security reasons — are the ones who try to infiltrate the roadblocks, in many cases successfully.

Resentment festers among Palestinians with permits who watch as those lacking the documents return home daily with cash in hand. Many workers couldn't even pick up their July paychecks since the Mahaneh Yehuda bombings came on the 30th, a day before pay-day.

"The blackmarket workers come to work as usual, but legal workers cannot," said Mohammad Amer, who works for Kay Le'oved (Workers' Hot Line), an Israeli organisation devoted to the rights of Palestinian and foreign workers. Amer said that sometimes a steady stream of Palestinians can be spotted infiltrating from the Kalkilya area, not far from the Abu Sneh roadblock.

Sometimes lax enforcement of

the closure is humane, as in the case of a young Palestinian mother who recently managed to evade checkpoints between Jenin and Jerusalem to fetch her baby from Makassed Hospital.

Other times it isn't. Tragically, three Jenin residents convicted of murdering taxi driver Samuel Ben-Baruch last week apparently also skirted a roadblock to enter Jerusalem without permits.

Oren Shohor, former government coordinator for the West Bank and Gaza, presided over several closures in the past three years but questions their effectiveness.

"From a security standpoint we have to see things in a wider context," Shohor told Israel Radio. Instead of strengthening security, "we are actually achieving the opposite," he said.

Some officials are concerned that the extremists gain an upper hand during closures. They feel the government's decision to withhold tax money from the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and a stepped-up campaign of demolishing illegally built homes, could be fuelling resentment and enhancing sympathy with Islamic extremists, instead of helping Israeli security.

David Bar-Ilan, director of communications for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, reasoned that much of the money went to pay Palestinian police officers suspected of involvement in attacks on Israelis. But the PNA also needs to pay its police to conduct the crackdown on terrorism that Israel demands.

Brig. Gen. Salim Bourdine, deputy head of the West Bank and Gaza civil police force, has noted that Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin used to compensate the PNA during closures to show that the measure was for security and not punishment.

"Unlike Netanyahu, Rabin used to compensate us for losses during closures," Bourdine said. He recalled two Israeli payments to the PNA of \$15 million and \$20m made during closure periods.

This is what PNA Chairman Yasser Arafat has sought to point out, but his warnings sometimes get lost in the combative rhetoric he spews out in speeches, such as

a call this week to his people to prepare for a battle, "as we swore when we fired the first bullet for Jerusalem."

The statement was loosely translated by most Israeli media as a call to armed struggle, a strategy Arafat was supposed to have ditched when he made peace with Israel in 1993.

Few Israelis actually understood that Arafat's main point was that he wanted to release Israel's stranglehold on PNA tax money.

Another potential consequence of the closure is a threatened Palestinian boycott of Israeli products, which could cost the Israeli economy tens of millions of dollars in lost revenues, or some \$2 billion a year.

The boycott called last week is reminiscent of the repeated general strikes and attempts at blockading Israeli goods that took place during the intifada. More ominously, it signals another backslide into the pre-Oslo agreement era and more of rapprochement between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Hamas. Hamas has called for boycotting Israel since 1991, and at the time, Fateh opposed the strategy.

But Israel's persistent closures after bombings seem to make many Palestinians feel like they are back in intifada times.

Already there are indications that the boycott is being observed.

"Today we returned Israeli fruit, appliances, toys, dairy products and frozen meat," Hisham Dasouki, a Palestinian security chief at the Karmi crossing point into the Gaza Strip, told the Ramallah-based daily Al Ayyam last week.

Palestinian customs officials are also carrying a list of banned Israeli goods. Explaining the boycott, one Palestinian scientist said that the message from Oslo had been economic interdependence between the Palestinians and Israel, and globalisation.

"Now that Israel is changing the game, we must too," said Jad Izbak, a food biologist in Bethlehem, who says he was arrested during the intifada for writing a handbook teaching Palestinians to grow vegetables in window boxes instead of buying from Israel.

LETTERS

Photo in poor taste

To the Editor:

WE WERE touched by your coverage of the tragic demise of Diana, princess of Wales, who indeed was an "irreplaceable princess" (Jordan Times, Sept. 1, 1997). However, we were shocked by the photograph you published on page 12 showing the princess of Wales getting out of her car. The picture was in extremely poor

taste (as are most of the paparazzi photos) and cast a shadow over your otherwise sympathetic coverage. We would have preferred to see photographs showing Princess Diana's humanitarian work.

Yara Shabzadeh,
Sireen Khalifeh,
Kamal Al Salem,
Amman.

Picture good for tabloids

To the Editor:

SHAME ON you and all your staff responsible for the picture of Princess Diana on the last page (Jordan Times, Sept. 1, 1997).

I expected more sensitivity and respect

in Jordan.
You are like the tabloids.

Peter Waitring,
Manager, Bomag Middle East
Office,
Amman.

Victim of greed

To the Editor:

THE WORLD has lost one of its most glorious women: Princess Diana. Princess Diana was a benevolent woman who spent her life performing humanitarian acts. Not only has the world lost one of its most popular and loved women, the British tabloids also lost the woman whose pictures adorned their front pages for years. She was a victim of greedy reporters, photographers and editors who

harassed the troubled princess.

Princess Diana had a lot to go through and she rarely had a moment of peace to herself. One only wonders if, after this tragic and sudden loss, the media will learn their lesson. It is a sad state of affairs that innocent victims have to pay the price for the greed of others.

Jomana Wael Karadsheh,
Amman.

Time to demine

To the Editor:

THE ARTICLE "Jordan to examine anti-mine legislation at Oslo conference" (Jordan Times, Aug. 31, 1997), which appeared on the same day Diana, princess of Wales passed away, is an appropriate coincidence, knowing that the princess was involved in a campaign against landmines. Jordan's demining of all minefields would be extremely welcome: in case we are unable to demine all fields, the ones in the proximity of populated areas, that are no longer strategic, would be a good start.

Annually, the local media reports that mines have been detonated accidentally by civilians who are either maimed or killed. In many cases, the casualties are children who have entered a minefield unintentionally.

The idea that there are 280,000 mines in a country of 4.25 million people, or a rate of 1 mine per 6.5 citizens, is astounding and, to say the least, very dangerous,

especially since we are not in a state of war.

This humanitarian issue is serious and has been emphasised greatly in the past two days due to the princess of Wales' humanitarian concern. It would be an appropriate remembrance to her if Jordan were to step up its demining efforts with the financial and technical assistance from friendly countries other than, but also including, Germany and the United States, whom we thank for their assistance and participation in this programme.

This issue will certainly gain momentum in the days to come. As always, we should continue to strive to be leaders in the developing world as we have done and been doing in numerous other international causes and issues.

Kim Abu Jabat,
Amman.

Jordan, Syria plan gradual exemption of customs duties

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan and Syria are planning to introduce a system whereby by each side will gradually exempt the other from customs duty on exchanged goods in implementation of a 1975 trade agreement. Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hani Mulki announced Monday.

He said that Damascus and Amman are taking a preliminary step by preparing a short list of goods exchanged by the two countries to exempt them from customs duty.

The minister added that the two sides are expected to reach a final agreement on exemptions during a meeting he will hold with Syria's minister of economy and foreign trade, Mohammad Al Imadi, in Cairo where the two ministers will be attending the meetings of the Arab Economic and Social Council on Sept. 7.

Dr. Mulki said that a long list of products are expected to be exempted from customs duty as provided for in the 1975 trade agreement.

In his statement, Dr. Mulki referred to "the investors' services unit" which was created by his ministry and indicated that it aims at promoting investments in Jordan and facilitating procedures for the

execution of projects.

After starting projects, investors normally face problems while dealing with different institutions and government departments and this unit was created specifically to address these problems, the minister said. By receiving complaints from investors and by acting on their behalf, the unit overcomes the difficulties through contacts with the various concerned departments, explained the minister.

"Simply put, this unit serves as a single go-between department which the investors deal with to guarantee solution for their problems," said the minister.

Referring to the merger of the ministry of industry, trade and supply with the ministry of supply, Dr. Mulki said the merger will be taking place in three stages and the process is being undertaken to cater to the requirements of the global economy and the economic restructuring programme in Jordan and to speed up the process of economic reform and trade liberalisation.

The merger, said the minister, will eventually reduce the number of the two ministries' affiliated departments, noting that a special law will be enacted about the merger in Parliament.

Arabs urged to pursue reforms to boost income

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states need to press ahead with economic reforms to tackle unemployment and improve living standards after years of stagnation by several members, according to their economic watchdog.

In its latest study on regional economies, the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) said most of the Arab League's 22 members had achieved satisfactory results from reforms in some sectors.

"But it is noticed that they have not realised the aspired goals of the reforms," the Arab League's main financial institution said.

"Economic growth rates have remained relatively low. Compared to high population growth, the per capita income in the Arab countries remained almost unchanged while there was a deterioration in unemployment in some members," the study indicated.

The Abu Dhabi-based fund said most regional states were also still reeling under heavy debt, which is putting pressure on their balances of payments.

It said tackling those balances and liberalising fiscal policies could only be achieved through a "sustainable economic growth."

"Most Arab countries are striving to tackle all those issues through the reform programmes but the results are still generally lagging behind the aspired levels despite progress in some sectors," it said.

"This should prompt member states to push ahead with the efforts to restructure their economies with the help of the AMF and other institutions," the study urged.

Several Arab states have reported better economic performance from reform programmes but long-standing problems such as unemployment, foreign debt, balance of payment deficits and modest increases in incomes have persisted.

The reforms were spurred by chronic economic woes.

low oil prices and demands for economic restructuring by the International Monetary Fund.

But such plans in some members have come under fire by local officials and businessmen on the grounds they are slow and limited.

In the Gulf, most governments have announced plans to reform their oil-reliant economies but such programmes have only been partially implemented. Experts attribute this to a recovery in oil prices in the past two years.

The Arabs' main economic problems include the accumulation of foreign debt, which is estimated at more than \$150 billion, excluding military debt.

Most members are also suffering from high unemployment because of low growth rates. Such modest growth has also stifled improvement in the living standards as it is outpaced by the population growth of around four per cent.

"The economies of member states are still suffering from several aspects of weakness, making them vulnerable to external shocks," said the AMF, which has been involved in reform programmes in the region.

"They include mainly the limited productive base, lack of diversification in exports and the high indebtedness in several members," it added.

The report also criticised Arab states for failing to attract enough investment and maintaining restrictions on the private sector.

A recent report by another Arab League organisation, the Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation, said the economies of most regional states recorded relatively high growth rates in 1996.

But it said this was made possible mainly by a surge in oil prices which boosted Arab oil income to a 13-year high of more than \$90 billion.

Egypt signs contracts with Iraq to supply food

BAGHDAD (R) — An Egyptian state-run company has signed contracts with Iraq to supply foodstuffs under its oil-for-food deal with the United Nations, an official from the firm said Monday.

"We have signed with Iraq contracts worth \$15 million to bring vegetable oil, soap and detergents," Abdul Sattar Suleiman, deputy head of Egypt's Food Industries Holding Company told Reuters.

Mr. Suleiman said Egyptian firms were able to bring \$48 million worth of sugar, cooking oil and detergents to Iraq under the first phase of the U.N. programme.

He said the Egyptian businessmen were waiting for Iraq's Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Saleh to come back from Syria in order to conclude more deals.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates		Prices as at 30/08/97 18:22	
US Dollar	1.8462	0.6301	1.5189
DE Mark	0.5417	0.3410	0.2221
GB Sterling	1.3870	2.8315	2.2113
CH Franc	0.6664	3.2142	0.4141
JP Yen	0.0085	1.5711	0.5357
CA Dollar	0.7113	1.3305	0.4955
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0251	0.3406
SE Krona	0.0002	0.8430	0.2628
FR Franc	0.1807	0.2967	0.1912

Middle Eastern Currencies		Prices as at 30/08/97 18:22	
US Dollar	0.7080	3.7506	0.3770
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	0.2888	0.5325
Saudi Riyal	0.2688	0.1888	0.5325
Bahraini Dinar	2.285	1.2751	0.3491
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0304
Kuwait Dinar	3.2760	2.3194	1.2250
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0212
Lebanese Lira	0.15	0.4403	2.4386
Egyptian	0.2554	0.2092	1.1000

Energy	
Brent	18.58
WTI	20.14
Bonny	18.58
Dubai	17.80
UL Gas	217.00

Mid-East Currencies		Prices as at 30/08/97 18:22	
SA Riyal	0.2688	0.4928	0.1679
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.5053	0.1715
KW Dinar	3.2760	0.6533	2.0631
BH Dinar	0.2770	4.302	1.6708
CY Pound	1.8395	3.2637	1.1573

Metal Prices	
Gold (oz's)	323
Silver (oz's)	4.22
Platinum (oz's)	413
Al (3 Months)	1644
CU (3 Months)	2186
Zinc (3 Months)	1494
Lead (3 Months)	620
Ni (3 Months)	6230

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)	
USD	5.43
GBP	6.94
JPY	0.44
DEM	3.12
CHF	3.23
ITL	6.73

Main Equity Indices	
New York	DOW JONES
London	FT-SE 100
Tokyo	Nikkei 225
Paris	CAC 40
Frankfurt	DAX

Energy	
Coffee (c/lb)	170
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1598
Sugar (\$/ton)	247.8
Wheat (\$/ton)	142
Soya (c/lb)	22.02
Tee (c/lb)	185
Barley (\$/bush)	0
Rice (\$/ton)	450

JOD Cross Rates	
US Dollar	0.708
GB Sterling	1.282
DE Mark	0.3827
CH Franc	0.4539
FR Franc	0.113
JP Yen	0.5990
NL Guilder	0.3382
IT Lira	0.3912

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

World Bank prescribes infrastructure, education to fight poverty in India

WASHINGTON (AFP) — India must maintain steady economic growth and invest in infrastructure and education to fight poverty, which affects one-third of its population, the World Bank prescribed in a report. "Economic growth has accounted for the lion's share of poverty reduction in India over the last 50 years," said Zoubida Allaoui, a World Bank economist who authored a study titled "India: Achievements and Challenges in Reducing Poverty."

The percentage of poor in India fell from 50 per cent of the population in the 1950s to 35 per cent today, the World Bank said.

But while the percentage as dropped, India's population growth has led the number of people living in

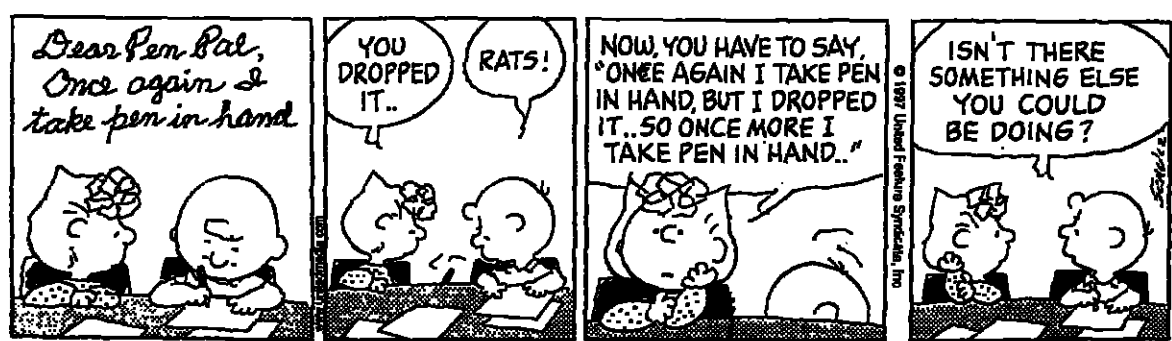
poverty to grow from 164 million in 1951 to 312 million in 1993-1994.

The report claimed that if India — which has the largest number of poor people of any country — can maintain its six to seven per cent growth rates of the past three years poverty could drop to 6.3 per cent by 2005.

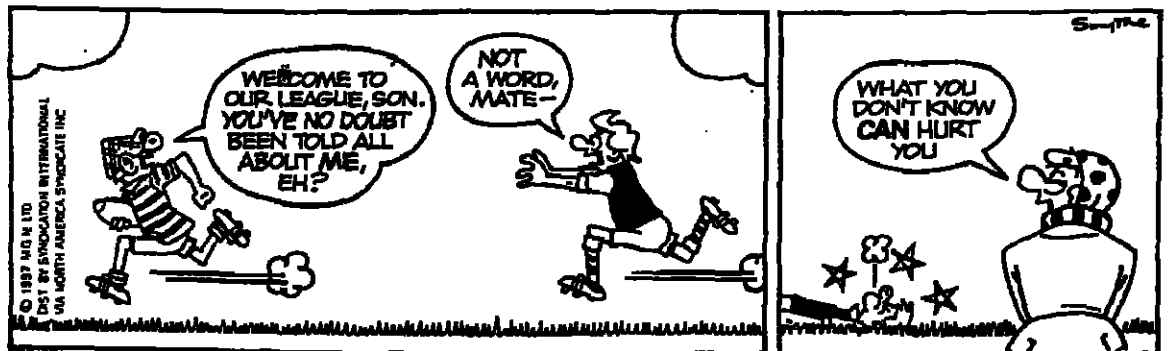
To reduce poverty, the World Bank report suggests India reinforce its free-market reforms and that it invest in health, education and infrastructure rather than subsidies.

While subsidies for the poor equal 11 per cent of the India's gross national product, only five per cent goes for health and education and four per cent for infrastructure, the bank said.

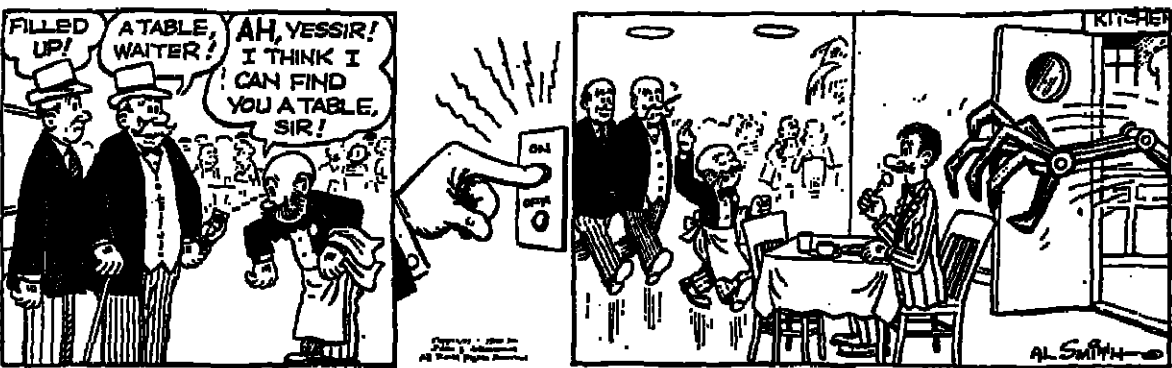
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

1 Short biography

5 Restrict

10 Shed tears

14 Biblical name

15 Spud

16 Magnus of TV

17 Small dog

20 Greek letter

21 Beginning

22 Arm bones

23 "What's up, —?"

24 ABA member: abbr.

25 Powerful dog

33 Carriage

34 Laughs loudly

35 Singer Lewis

36 Chantilly, e.g.

37 South American plain

38 Highest point

39 Native American

40 Some Europeans

41 Tempo

42 Large dog

46 Inspect

47 Rent

48 Page, the singer

51 "— With Love"

54 Govt. gp.

57 Small dog

60 Seed covering

61 Mother, at Elton

62 Water plant

63 TV part

64 Buttrusses

65 Dieter's concern

DOWN

1 Coquette

2 Fateful date

3 Hack

4 Pierre's friend

5 Check the flow

6 Beats

7 "— Jury" (Spillane)

8 Undiluted

9 Numerical prefix

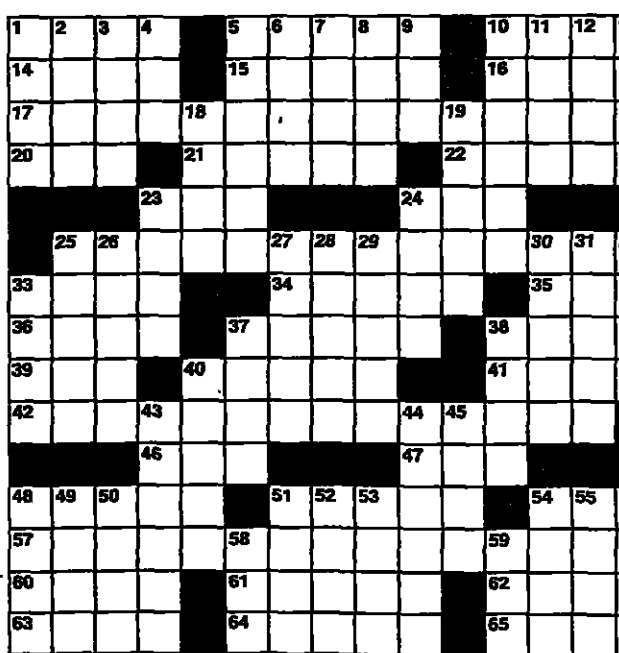
10 — do (rich)

11 Anthony or Barbara

12 Tower city

13 Hardy heroine

18 Imitates a dove



by Matthew Higgins

Puzzle solved:

SPAT	RISER	AGAR
OONA	EMTLE	VERO
FLURDELIS	ENNA	
AKA	ASTO	PARDON
SARTRE	STERN	
LABOR	REAM	ACCORDS
ALOT	SUITS	PENN
TOU	LISLE	PESKY
RETOOLS	DIET	
INDEED	CRETAN	
SEQUIN	OAKS	ONA
PLUS	CONCIERGE	
ISEE	ENURE	AUNT
NESS	DETER	HEDY

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19 Babe and Westheimer	54 Cultivate
23 Coin	55 Bright star
24 Hairdo	56 Spirited steed
25 Really put out	58 Minor demon
26 Indy entrant	59 English films: abbr.
27 Outer garments	
28 Spirited vigor	
29 Backslide	
30 Computing influence	
31 Bedouin, e.g.	
32 Singing pair	
33 Spark or fire end	
37 Sugar source	
38 Support	
40 — on thick (exaggerate)	
43 Courage	
44 Toolkit item	
45 Mister in Bonn	
46 Exam letters	
49 Israeli port	
50 Labor	
51 Nicholas or Ivan	
52 "— be in England..." (Browning)	
53 Phase	

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Get small marketing tasks out of the way in the morning today so that after lunch you can take advantage of personal opportunities. Later this evening you can meet with close friends for recreational activities which will be fun.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Be persistent in attempting to solve a difficulty with a loved one. Employ the capable hands and advice of friends. Later this evening will be a good time for you to consult with fellow associates concerning career activities.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Be careful in handling an outside affair this morning. Labour on soothing a nervous friend who is suspicious about the method of operation with a new project. Cooperate with both your fellow associates and a bigwig.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) A decision which you have been avoiding finally demands attention today, so make the effort to proceed. Keep your career in mind while addressing it, thereby you won't make any mistakes in your method of operation.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Get mundane matters out of the way early today in order to make room for a more interesting project. Be tactful towards the advances of a new acquaintance. Later this evening you can meet with knowledgeable people.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Make sure that a fellow associate knows your intentions for a joint project. Pay close attention to public affairs, thereby you can handle any adverse situation which comes to you in the days ahead.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Make sure that those who have been loyal know that you appreciate it. Finish all career activities which you have started. Focus on obligations which you have neglected and complete whatever tasks you are given.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Make your entertainment appointments early today, then follow through on regular duties, which will gain you recognition of a bigwig. Listen carefully to the ideas of a fellow associate and make good use of them.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Show your devotion to loved ones today by labouring extra hard at home and making your mate out somewhere special later this evening. This is a good time to discuss with a bigwig the ideas you have for a new project.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Handle as many messages as possible this morning, so you can give some much needed attention to home affairs in the days ahead. Later this evening you can be happy, by spending some quality time with your loved ones.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Morning provides the best opportunity to settle business activities today, and collect any funds which you deserve. Visit a new acquaintance later this evening, however, square business first, thereby you can be successful.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You should stop procrastinating on fulfilment of promises today, since if you don't make the effort you could lose your reputation. You will need a larger income in the days ahead. Try to look into new enterprises. Birthstone of September: Sapphire — Lady Lazuli

Study finds bank's late strategies and well-timed hesitant to finance

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Study finds banks lacking strategies and well-studied plans, hesitant to finance exports

**** A STUDY** about banking services has showed that local banks in general have no strategic planning, no well-studied plans and no sufficient future studies. The study indicated that the banks' willingness to finance exports is limited and that they also have limited expectations to obtain the ISO quality certificate. "Banks are hesitant in financing exports and if credit is extended in this regard, banks are careful and the financing is limited to between 10 and 30 per cent of the required amount in addition to taking various collaterals," the study said.

According to the study, Jordanian commercial banks doubt the capability of Jordanian financial and commercial markets to establish or absorb successful financial institutions that can achieve suitable income, encourage banks to deal with the financial market and attract foreign funds that lead to increased trading in the market. The banks have also cast doubt about the capability of Jordanian specialised laws to attract large investments that would lead to an increase in financial operations and to attract financial institutions that would contribute to building and deepening the financial market.

The study stressed also the following three points:

- 1) Expediting the completion of raising the capital of banks in addition to building reserves to increase shareholders' equity as well as improving the quality of assets to become less risky.
- 2) Convincing the banks to increase lending to developing sectors, especially the agricultural, industrial and services sectors, and infrastructure projects.
- 3) Adopting a less strict monetary policy to lessen borrowing costs and to weigh financing large projects by Jordanian banks (Al Dustour).

Cabinet approves proposals to restructure, privatise Royal Jordanian

**** THE COUNCIL** of Ministers has approved a proposed strategy to restructure and privatise Royal Jordanian in accordance with the recommendations of the Higher Ministerial Committee for Privatisation. The strategy calls for registering an airline company owned by Royal Jordanian and a strategic partner from the private sector. This company would operate on commercial basis after completing the restructuring process of Royal Jordanian.

To achieve this strategy, the Cabinet has approved the formation of an executive team to manage the restructuring and privatisation processes. The team will be led by a highly-experienced and full-time senior official and includes senior officials from the ministries of transport, finance and the Privatisation Executive Unit at the Prime Ministry as members. The team will represent the government in working with international consultants and donors of technical assistance.

Meanwhile, the Higher Ministerial Committee for privatisation has approved the plan of the Jordan Investment Corporation to sell the shares of the government in public shareholding companies where the state equity in these firms is less than five per cent of their capital (Al Aswaj).

Securities Commission members have high qualifications, wide experience

AMMAN (J.T.) — The new Securities Law of 1997, which was published in the Official Gazette on May 15, 1997, has authorised the establishment of a Securities Commission which has a legal entity and enjoys administrative and financial autonomy and directly reports to the prime minister.

The Securities Commission, empowered by the law, is set to provide the appropriate environment to achieve sound dealing in the securities market in addition to its role as a regulating body in charge of organising and developing the securities market on one hand, and the Jordanian capital market on the other.

Moreover, the Commission will protect investors and shareholders from fraud, deceit and any malpractices and will also regulate the disclosure of information related to the securities that are important to investors, particularly when taking their investment decisions in this regard.

Amman Bourse, the Securities Deposit Centre, and the Association of the Certified Financial Professionals, are the three entities which fall under the supervision of the Commission. The Commission's board comprises five members including the chairman and his deputy who are appointed by the Cabinet and ratified by a Royal Decree. Here are profiles of each of the five members of the Securities Commission.

Michel Marto — chairman of the Securities Commission

Michel Marto was born in 1940 in Jerusalem. His academic credentials include a Masters Degree and a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Southern California (1970). Prior to his graduation, he also spent a year at Stanford University doing graduate research.

Since 1989, Dr. Marto has served as deputy governor of the Central Bank of Jordan. He has also served as chairman of the board of the Industrial Development Bank and the Jordan Mortgage and Refinance Company. Dr. Marto is also a member of the board of the Arab Potash Company.

In addition, Dr. Marto has represented Jordan in many important bilateral and multilateral committees within the framework of the peace talks. He was also Jordan's debt negotiator for the London Club (1989-1993) and the Paris Club

(1989-1997) as well as the bilateral negotiations of creditor countries of the Paris Club. He is a member of the negotiating team with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and has played a critical role in helping Jordan achieve monetary stabilisation and economic reform.

Previously, Dr. Marto worked at the Bank of Jordan (1979-1989), first as deputy general manager, and then as managing director. Between 1977 and 1979, Dr. Marto served as the deputy general manager of the Jordan Fertiliser Industry Company. He has also held several positions as a professional economist. Between 1975 and 1977, he was an economist with the World Bank (IBRD) in Washington, D.C. Prior to that, (1971-1975) he served as the director of the economic research department at the Royal Scientific Society and economic adviser to HRH Crown Prince Hassan. Between 1969 and 1970, Dr. Marto headed the economic research department at the Central Bank of Jordan.

Dr. Marto has also presented and published research papers on economic issues at various international forums.

Hishal Tall: Deputy chairman of the Securities Commission

Hisham Tall served as the minister of justice from 1994 until 1996. He also was the minister of state for prime ministry affairs from 1996 until March, 1997.

In addition, Mr. Tall has been a judge at the Higher Court of Justice — from 1991 until 1993, and headed the Office of Prosecutor between (1993-1994).

Mr. Tall has been a member in the National Council, and has been practising law as a legal advisor from 1966 until 1990. Born in 1929, Mr. Tall earned his law degree from University of Damascus, Syria in 1964.

Tayser Abdul Jabbar: Commissioner/ the Securities Commission

Tayser Abdul Jabbar is the director of the Arab Consulting Centre.

Prior to heading the Arab Consulting Centre, which he established in 1985, Dr. Abdul Jabbar served as the minister of labour and social development from 1984 until 1985. He was also

undersecretary at the Ministry of Labour between 1979 and 1984. Dr. Abdul Jabbar was the secretary general for the National Planning Council (1977-1979), an economic expert with ESCWA (1975-1976), and director of economic of international organisation department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1973-1974).

Dr. Abdul Jabbar started his career as a bank officer at the Arab Bank in 1963, and became the head of the banking operations section at the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) and later director of the economic research department in 1970.

From 1989 until 1993, Dr. Abdul Jabbar was the under-secretary general of the United Nations and executive secretary for the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

Born in 1940, Dr. Abdul Jabbar earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in economics from University of Southern California, USA.

Dr. Abdul Jabbar is active in a number of organisations at the domestic, regional and international levels, including the Institute of Management Consultants for which he serves as a chairman, and he has also been chairman and member of the board of Arab Labour Organisation, Social Security Corporation, the Vocational Training Corporation and the World Affairs Council. He was recently elected as secretary general of the Jordan Businessmen Association.

Dr. Abdul Jabbar was a member of the Jordanian government delegation to the U.N. General Assembly, representing Jordan in the economic and financial committee between (1972-1974). He also was the spokesman for the Group of 77 for expert group meeting on the Reverse Transfer of Technology (UNCTAD) which was held in Geneva/Switzerland in the late seventies.

Dr. Abdul Jabbar has many published papers and studies that dealt with Arab economic integration, Jordan's economy and human resource development. He also lectured in many universities and institutes in Jordan, the USA, Egypt and other countries.

Maher Waked: Commissioner/the Securities Commission

Maher Waked has had twenty-eight years of banking experience, and is currently assistant manager of the Bank of Jordan.

Dr. Waked, born in 1941, obtained a Ph.D. in public finance, USA, 1993 and has obtained ISO Internal Audit Designation, 1997.

Dr. Waked served as department head of banking supervision, foreign currency, and internal auditing at the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ). He was also seconded as advisor to establish banking supervision department in United Arab Emirates (UAE). This was under arrangement between CBJ and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The department later became one of the main departments at the Central Bank in UAE. In addition, Dr. Waked participated in the establishment stages of the Cities and Village Development Bank in cooperation with the World Bank.

Dr. Waked held several positions at the bank of Jordan which include: head of the inspection and audit department and establishing loan recovery department. He is also on the board of directors of several public shareholding companies representing the Bank of Jordan in this regard.

Dr. Waked was appointed by the Attorney General to investigate cases of some collapsing banks in Jordan. In addition, he was a member in the research team of the Royal Scientific Society. He published books and wrote articles in newspapers as well as in specialised financial magazines at both the local and international levels.

Dr. Waked is also a lecturer at the Arab Banking and Financial Science Academy.

Abdul Hamid Al Hayari: Commissioner/the Securities Commission

Abdul Hamid Al Hayari has been the director general of the General Supplies Department since 1991, in which he was heading the Central Tenders Committee in charge of purchasing the supplies requested by ministries and governmental establishments in addition to rendering consultation services to governmental authorities concerning the management of general supplies.

Mr. Al Hayari started his career as a financial auditor at the Ministry of Finance between (1966-1969) and was a commissioned accountant for the Ministry of Agriculture from 1969 until 1971. He headed the Central Tenders Section at the Ministry of Finance between (1971-1974).

Mr. Al Hayari served as the financial controller for revenues and expenditures at the Ministry of Tourism, Foreign Affairs Ministry, and the Radio and Television Corporation between (1975-1980).

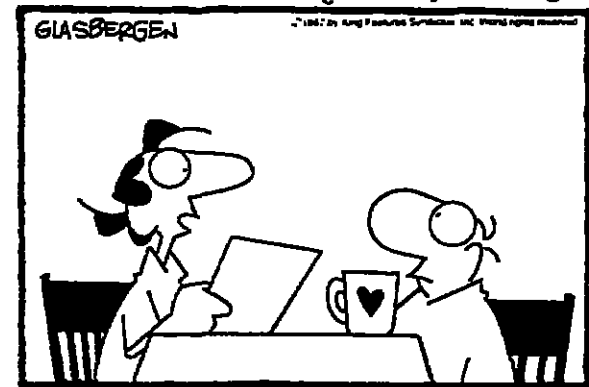
Prior to his post as the director general of the General Supplies Department, Mr. Al Hayari was the assistant manager of general expenditures section and the head of expenditures section at the Ministry of Finance between (1980-1984).

Born in 1943, Mr. Al Hayari earned a B.A. in commerce/accounting and administrative management from Baghdad University, Iraq 1966. He lectured in subjects of accountancy, financial controlling supplies and tenders management, in several institutes in Jordan.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
BANKING MARKET SHARE LIST FOR MONDAY 01/09/1997											
PART 12 MONTHS HIGH	PART 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P/E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	PERCENT	PERCENT
1	300,000	230,000	ARAB BANK	14.1	1.31	96	7360	2231070	300.00	304.50	8.50
2	1,000	1,000	JOR. NATIONAL BANK	10.3	0.00	20	15800	30030	1.90	1.91	0.01
3	5,000	4,100	CALAND ANHON BANK	10.3	3.00	2	2150	10750	5.00	5.00	0.00
4	2,400	2,140	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	8.3	0.00	8	8500	1450	2.00	2.24	0.24
5	5,000	4,450	THE JORDANIAN BANK	14.2	4.08	5	1300	6175	4.75	4.75	0.00
6	1,050	1,050	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	4.5	9.21	20	2750	1400	3.10	3.10	0.00
7	4,050	3,820	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	19.7	0.00	10	10966	42316	3.75	3.85	0.02
8	3,800	3,080	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	21.9	0.00	10	1450	4910	3.37	3.40	0.03
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 222.61	FCBI: -1.67	166	48250	2331972				
1	1,870	1,530	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	8.0	6.02	9	2816	4474	1.66	1.66	0.00
2	2,900	2,450	RIVER NIGRALAND	14.6	5.40	3	2800	8084	2.75	2.89	0.14
3	7,400	6,000	UNION. CEMENT. FCT.	7.9	0.00	8	2100	16400	1.20	1.24	0.04
4	1,550	930	KATEL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	10	26700	37409	1.41	1.41	0.00
5	7,250	5,790	JOR. CEMENT. FCT.	6.0	1.45	10	18900	99131	1.32	1.32	0.00
6	1,220	930	SANJA INDUSTRY	8.2	6.40	5	1000	1720	1.73	1.72	0.01
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 111.75	FCBI: -0.15	51	60466	138384				
1	4,450	3,220	JOR. CEMENT. FCT.	26.2	2.83	21	4871	18781	3.33	3.39	0.06
2	4,140	2,860	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.6	2.52	8	50100	191180	1.86	1.82	0.04
3	10,110	8,070	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9.9	8.67	4	200	2046	10.25	10.25	0.00
4	4,250	3,040	ARAB BANK	11.5	4.81	11	3150	13085	4.14	4.16	0.02
5	9,800	5,000	ARAB BANK	15.8	4.65	2	750	4838	6.45	6.45	0.00
6	5,650	4,200	DAM ALDAR. PV. DEV.	13.5	0.00	1	500	11	230	230	0.00
7	1,950	1,500	ARAB BANK	9.7	0.00	1	500	2100	1.00	1.00	0.00
8	3,990	2,750	GENERAL INVESTMENT	7.4	4.07	2	5692	21003	3.69	3.69	0.00
9	1,280	1,000	ARAB BANK	20.7	0.00	6	2050	2191	1.08	1.07	0.01
10	770	510	NATIONAL BANK	9	0.00	4	2600	1378	0.52	0.53	0.01
11	1,000	510	INVESTED JORDAN	9	0.00	1	1000	150	0.55	0.55	0.00
12	940	510	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9	0.00	2	290	163	0.55	0.55	0.00
13	2,580	1,510	UNION. CEMENT. FCT.	12.7	6.58	2	750	1240	1.57	1.52	0.05
14	1,910	1,080	UNION. CEMENT. FCT.	9	0.00	8	8500	4130	1.56	1.56	0.00
15	1,510	910	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	12.1	10.99	8	1300	1183	0.91	0.91	0.00
16	1,410	1,000	UNION. CEMENT. FCT.	14.3	6.41	10	2750	4130	1.53	1.53	0.00
17	1,070	810	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	15.6	0.00	1	280	213	0.85	0.85	0.00
18	2,090	1,340	ARAB BANK	56.3	0.00	39	7082	11077	1.56	1.56	0.00
19	1,330	950	UNION. CEMENT. FCT.	6.5	0.00	4	2550	1035	1.50	1.19	0.31
20	1,180	860	UNION. CEMENT. FCT.	49.1	0.00	13	17500	18822	1.05	1.08	0.03
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 121.14	FCBI: -0.47	117	105365	304813				
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 167.59	FCBI: +1.11	334	214081	277268				
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE LIST FOR MONDAY 01/09/1997											
1	630	340	CENTRAL CEMENT	9	0.00	9	15250	5338	35	35	0.00
2	650	400	JOR. TRADE FCT.	10.7	0.00	2	750	300	40	40	0.00
3	950	500	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9	0.00	8	4366	2477	57	57	0.00
4	640	460	UNION. CEMENT. FCT.	9	0.00	27	155000	51105	70	71	0.01
5	570	370	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9	0.00	8	1450	666	39	39	0.00
6	480	300	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9	0.00	2	1150	288	25	25	0.00
7	570	380	ARAB BANK	43.8	0.00	7	5800	2254	38	38	0.00
8	570	400	NATL. PETROL. REFINERY	43.8	0.00	7	6950	3128	40	40	0.00
9	620	370	JORDANIAN BANK	33.9	6.67	1	2030	1518	75	75	0.00
10	580	430	ARAB BANK	33.9	0.00	10	83000	40270	60	60	0.00
11	730	480	MICHAEL PHARM. 75%	2	0.00	3	2500	975	64	64	0.00
12	1,190	860	UNION. CEMENT. FCT.	2	0.00	6	4500	3805	109	110	0.01
13	570	350	RACE PHARM. 81%	2	0.00	39	78150	14531	66	67	0.01
14	570	310	UNION. CEMENT. FCT.	2	0.00	7	2600	806	121	121	0.00
15	620	390	UNION. CEMENT. FCT.	2	0.00	3	2000	1200	40	40	0.00
16	1,000	700	MAL. ALUMINUM. 75%	98.8	0.00	8	9400	4324	71	71	0.00
17	1,020	720	ARAB BANK	37.1	0.00	1	280	193	77	77	0.00
18	850	590	UNION. CEMENT. FCT.	7.4	26.67	2	2350	750	60	60	0.00
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 121.14	FCBI: -0.47	117	105365	304813				

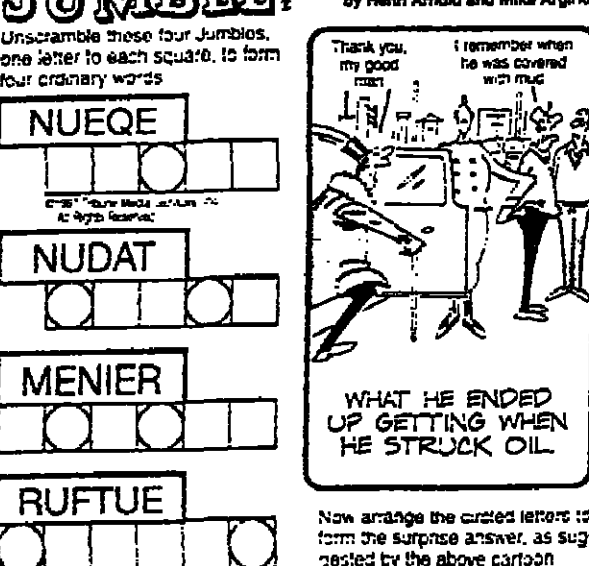
1: Part 12 months high
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3: Negative P/E
4: Earning in loss or N/A for the most recent year

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Answer: The last quarter of a tight game can turn into this — "CRUNCH TIME"

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Devers nails down one last win

CATANIA, Sicily (AFP) — America's Olympic 100 metres champion Gail Devers won the festival sprint here on Sunday and then declared that her trademark long nails were to be cut off.

Devers, who was part of an all star line-up invited to reanimate the newly renovated 'Cibali' stadium here, beat Ukraine's Zhanna Pinusevich, the world silver medalist at 100 and 200 metres titleholder, and then revealed the nails which are so long they curl round into the palm of her hands were to become a thing of the past.

"It's like smokers who try to give up. It's taken me a long time to realise they must go and as I regard this as a transitional season I've decided that the month of September is as good a time as any to cut them off," Devers said.

Another athlete who faces a change won the men's 100 metres — Namibian



American two times Olympic champion Gail Devers waves to spectators at Catania's Cibali stadium after she won the women's 100 meter in a festival of sprint at the World Student Games. Deves clocked her best time of 11.03 (Reuters photo)

Frankie Fredericks, who has decided he will be called Frank when he retires, completed the 100-200 double here.

Thirty-year-old Fredericks, who took silver in the 200 metres world title in Athens, blasted out of the blocks and easily disposed of Americans Dennis Mitchell and John Drummond.

Cuba's Ivan Pedroso showed what a champion he is by taking the World Student Games title here on Sunday with his last jump of the long jump competition — denying Jamaican

James Beckford who had led for the whole event.

Pedroso, the 24-year-old who won the world title in Athens earlier in the month, jumped for joy after his effort of 8.40 metres which was also a World Student Games record.

He left Beckford, who had led with 8.35m, who was due to jump last, a final shot at beating his tormentor.

The 22-year-old Jamaican, who was allowed back into competition in Athens when the IAAF revised their drugs ban policy and his three-month

suspension for testing positive for caffeine was revoked, made a good effort of it but touched down short with 8.33.

Pedroso's win completed a superb year, adding this title to the world indoor and outdoor versions.

For Beckford it was the third time he has had to take silver in a championships. He was second at the world championships two years ago, where Pedroso won, the Olympics, and here in a classic duel to round off the World Student Games in great style.

Five cities in tight race for 2004 Olympic Games

PARIS (AFP) — Athens says it is time for the Olympics to return to their spiritual home. Rome points to its organisational abilities and Stockholm claims it is the choice of the athletes.

Cape Town and Buenos Aires argue it is time the Games moved into new arenas.

The merits of all those arguments will be put to the test when the International Olympic Committee meets in Lausanne on Friday to decide the host city for the 2004 Olympic Games.

Insiders say it is one of the tightest races ever. The Games haven't been held in Europe since Barcelona in 1992; moving instead to Atlanta and Sydney.

That gives added urgency to the push from Athens, Rome and Stockholm. The Olympics have never been held in Africa or South America, though, boosting the arguments of Cape Town and Buenos Aires.

For all the arguments in favour of each candidate, there are counter-arguments against.

Athens' organisation of the recent world athletics championships came under fire; and the crowds were dismal over the first few days.

Rome has major traffic problems, while Stockholm's bid has been damaged, perhaps fatally, by a series of terrorist bombings attacks.

Cape Town lacks infrastructure and the high crime level in South Africa looms as a potential problem, while the people of Buenos

Aires have indicated no real enthusiasm for hosting the Olympiad.

Rome and Athens, the two founding cities of modern culture, have until recently been considered the front-runners. Then came the furore over the world athletics championships and discontent over uncompleted facilities at the World Student Games in Sicily, an event overseen by one of Rome's main backers — International Amateur Athletic Federation president Primo Nebiolo, who is also head of the International University Sports Federation (FISU).

It was the outspoken Nebiolo who sparked most of the debate over Athens' running of the world championships, claiming the IAAF had to step in to prevent the event becoming a debacle.

Following damaging organisational failures in Atlanta last year, where the transport system and the official results system failed and a terrorist bomb was responsible for two deaths and several injuries in the downtown area, IOC members are understandably keen to avoid both risks and the possibility of future maladministration.

Greece said Nebiolo's criticisms were motivated purely by his determination to see Rome's bid succeed.

"As a money lover and an Italian, Nebiolo is interested in his country, and Rome. But I believe that Greece will get the 2004 Olympics," said Greek Justice Minister Evangelos Yannopoulos.

It has been largely Rome, Athens and Stockholm at heart of the argument in the lead-up to the decision. Cape Town

and Buenos Aires, the less favoured candidates, have largely avoided the mud-slinging.

Rome has 30 of its 38 venues already in place, but hosted the Olympics in 1960. Some see it as too soon to return to a city that has already held the Games when new cities are clamouring for the opportunity.

Stockholm, which hosted the Olympics back in 1912, has been rocked by a series of arson attacks. An extremist Swedish group has threatened to "disrupt and destroy" the Games if they are awarded to the Swedish city.

"If Stockholm gets it, we will make the 1972 Olympic tragedy in Munich look like a kindergarten tiff," read a letter signed by the organisation whose name translates as "We Who Built Sweden."

The group says money used on the Olympics would be better spent on job creation and the building of facilities for the homeless.

Stockholm's plans — supported by athletes including Stefan Edberg, Willie Banks and Ato Boldon — include the expense of a new 70,000-seat Olympic Stadium on the sea at Hammarby.

"It is clear that it would have been better if these things (bombings) hadn't happened," said Stockholm mayor Mats Hulth. "But you just have to swallow, clench your teeth and push ahead."

With Sydney, Australia, hosting the 2000 Olympics, it is thought unlikely the Games will be held in the southern hemisphere twice in a row.

Cape Town, though, has conducted a solid campaign and there is a big push for sport's biggest occasion to be held in Africa.

President Nelson Mandela has said Cape Town deserves to host the Games as a reward for South Africa's averting bloodshed and soothing white minority fears prior to the 1994 all-race elections.

Mandela, who will be in Lausanne for the decision, said that an IOC vote for Cape Town would be "a vote for the deepening of democracy."

South Africa has hosted the rugby World Cup and the African Nations football championship, both with great success, since returning to the international sporting arena after the apartheid years.

Buenos Aires has been the most low-key candidate — but so was Atlanta before the decision on the 1996 host. Those IOC members who have visited the Argentine capital have reportedly been impressed with what they have seen as Buenos Aires makes its fifth bid to be an Olympic host.

"I'm impressed and surprised," said Israeli IOC member Alex Gilady after a visit to Buenos Aires in April. Olympic insiders have also said that Buenos Aires could appeal as a compromise candidate for members fed-up with the bickering between Rome and Athens.

There is a feeling within the IOC that all five bidding cities have the capability to host the Olympics. Now the 113 members have to decide which of the five bidders can produce a truly outstanding Olympics.

New coaches win NFL season-openers

NEW YORK (AFP) — Six new National Football League coaches and the Tennessee Oilers, relocated from Houston, tasted victory Sunday in the season's opening American football games.

Dick Vermeil of St. Louis, Bill Parcells of the New York Jets, Pete Carroll of the New England Patriots, Bobby Ross of the Detroit Lions, Jim Fassel of the New York Giants and Bruce Coslet of Cincinnati won in their debuts with new clubs.

Five other new coaches were losers, including Mike Ditka of New Orleans, Dan Reeves of Atlanta, Steve Mariucci of San Francisco, Kevin Gilbride of San Diego and Oakland's Joe Bugel.

Lawrence Phillips rushed for a career-high 125 yards and three touchdowns to lead St. Louis past New Orleans 38-24 in the first-ever meeting between two coaches who ended extended retirements to return.

"Needless to say, I'm very pleased," said 60-year-old Vermeil, out of the NFL for 14 years. "I owe an awful lot to my coaching staff. It took 15 years to do it again and our coaching staff did a hell of a job."

Ex-Chicago coach Ditka took on the challenge of overhauling the Saints, who were 3-13 last year, after a four-year hiatus from coaching.

Troy Aikman tied a career-high with four touchdown passes, two to Michael Irvin, as Dallas routed Pittsburgh 37-7.

Anthony Miller and Daryl Johnston also caught touchdown passes for the Cowboys, who handed Pittsburgh its worst defeat since a 41-10 loss to Cincinnati in 1989.

Tampa Bay spoiled the debut of Mariucci with a stunning 13-6 victory over the 49ers, whose offense failed to score a touchdown for the first time since 1991, a span of 86 regular-season and 10 playoff games.

The 49ers lost quarterback Steve Young to an



San Francisco 49ers quarterback Steve Young is sacked by Tampa Bay Buccaneers Hardy Nickerson during the fourth quarter. The Bucs, who sacked 49er quarterbacks seven times, won 13-6 (Reuters photo)

and Al Del Greco kick a 33-yard field goal 6:57 into overtime to give the Oilers a 24-21 victory over Oakland.

After 37 years in Houston, the Oilers moved to Tennessee but lured only 30,171 to the 62,000-seat Liberty Bowl in Memphis, their home for two years until a new stadium is built

in Nashville. Parcells, who led New England to last January's Super Bowl, made his debut with the Jets a rousing success. Neil O'Donnell threw a career-high five touchdown passes in a 41-3 dismantling of Seattle, giving the Jets as many triumphs this season as they managed in all of 1996.

"I couldn't hope for anything better than that," said Parcells.

"I realize that it's a long season and it's just one step,"

The Patriots flourished under Parcells' replacement Carroll with a 41-7 rout of San Diego. Drew Bledsoe completed 26-of-39 passes for 340 yards and four touchdowns for the Patriots, who led 31-0 at half-time.

Fassel became the first coach to win his NFL debut on his birthday as the Giants defeated the Philadelphia Eagles, 31-17. He turned 48 Sunday.

Coslet, 7-2 after replacing David Shula as Bengals coach last year, continued his winning ways as Cincinnati rallied from a 21-3 deficit to beat Arizona 24-21.

In other games, Denver beat Kansas City 19-3, Minnesota beat Buffalo 34-13, Miami defeated Indianapolis 16-10, Jacksonville edged Baltimore 28-27, Detroit beat Atlanta 28-17 and Washington topped Carolina 24-10.

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Maradona protests his innocence

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Argentine soccer star Diego Maradona is protesting his innocence after failing yet another drugs test.

Maradona said he had not taken cocaine, his agent Guillermo Coppola told the Argentine television program "Tribuna Caliente" on Sunday.

"Diego swore to me he did not take cocaine, so now I doubt the results of the doping test," Coppola said.

"He came to my house to avoid journalists who were chasing him."

Maradona was in hiding over the weekend, first staying out of sight in a friend's home in the wealthy Buenos Aires suburb of Recoleta and then returning to his own house.

"He hasn't told me when he will speak publicly about the issue, but I'm sure he will do so when

he's ready," Coppola said. "I say we leave him alone and don't pressure him."

Maradona tested positive for cocaine after an Argentine League match eight days ago in which he scored a penalty for his club Boca Juniors.

If a second test proves positive this week, Maradona, who turns 37 in October, is likely to be suspended for up to five years. The Argentine Football Association provisionally suspended him on Friday and has summoned him for a hearing Tuesday.

Maradona, who has had several drug problems, was attempting his fifth career comeback. He had tested positive for drugs twice before, in 1991 when he was playing for Napoli and during the 1994 World Cup in the United States.

Rivaldo fires Barca, Seedorf saves Real

MADRID (AFP) — Barcelona began the post-Ronaldo era Sunday with a comprehensive 3-0 demolition of Real Sociedad at the Nou Camp, 18 million-pound new recruit Rivaldo scoring twice.

With Brazilian striker Ronaldo finally having left for Inter Milan in the summer for a fee yet to be decided, compatriot Rivaldo, signed from Deportivo La Coruna, stepped into his shoes and made an immediate impression with goals in the 27th and 80th minutes.

Another Brazilian, Giovanni, hit Barca's other goal in the 56th minute against outclassed opponents.

Champions Real Madrid opened their title defence Saturday with a 1-1 draw against city rivals Atletico, salvaging a point only thanks to a 40-yard wonder goal by Dutchman Clarence Seedorf.

Real, now coached by German Jupp Heynckes following Fabio Capello's return to Milan, dominated the match at a seething Bernabeu stadium.

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♣ K 5 3
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3♣ Pass 4♣ Pass
Opening lead: King of ♠
It is not good enough just to formulate a plan in an effort to make your contract. Think twice in case there is a way to improve on it.
The auction was straightforward. Once spades were raised, South had more than enough to proceed to game, especially since the king of clubs raised to be worth an ace because of partner's one-club opening.
West led the king of diamonds, and declarer saw that the king of clubs was by no means a sure trick. Indeed, West tried to have the ace for the two-diamond overcall. However, declarer found a pretty line which increased the chances for the contract.
The king of diamonds was allowed to hold the first trick, and West continued with a diamond to the ace, declarer discarding a heart. Trumps were drawn in two rounds, the ace and king of hearts were cashed and a heart was ruffed. Had that fetched the lady, declarer would have been able to discard a club on the jack of hearts and claim the contract. If West had length in hearts, declarer could have engineered an endplay to secure the fulfilling trick. Unlucky — down one.
There was a hidden ace in the hand which declarer failed to utilize — the jack of diamonds! Declarer should win the first diamond, draw two rounds of trumps, and cash the ace and king of hearts. Then the jack of diamonds is led, declarer discarding a heart from hand.
West wins, but is endplayed. A club promotes the king, a diamond yields a ruff-duck, and a heart, covered by the jack, presents declarer with a third trick in that suit on any lie of the cards. Try it for yourself.



THE LATE PRINCESS IN WAX: Tourists pass a waxwork statue of Princess Diana at Madame Tussaud's in London on Monday. The funeral of the princess, will take place on Saturday, Buckingham Palace announced today (See story on page 1) (Reuters photo)

Egyptian press hawks conspiracy theories on princess, Dodi's death

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian press on Monday lamented the death of a 20th century Cinderella, and hinted that Princess Diana and her millionaire Egyptian lover died in a plot orchestrated by British intelligence services.

"Did the British secret services kill Diana?" shouted the Al Usbu weekly on its front page, suggesting a racist plot to end Diana's relationship with Dodi Fayed.

Fayed, the playboy film producer son of Egyptian billionaire Mohammed Fayed, was killed with Diana when their car crashed at high speed in a Paris tunnel while being pursued by a pack of press photographers on motorbikes.

"In spite of the statement by Prince Charles on the freedom of his ex-wife to choose her future husband, a feeling of spurned hatred raged among the royal family and it is likely that orders were given to the British secret services to put an end to this relationship at any price," said the paper.

"Diana's insistence on carrying on this relationship perhaps pushed the (secret) ser-

vices to get rid of her and her friend far from England so as not to attract suspicion," it added.

The paper doubted that the motorcyclists pursuing Diana's car were photographers, saying it was impractical to ride a motorbike and take photographs at the same time.

The Al Alam Al Yawm daily also questioned the official version of events with a front page headline: "Who killed Diana and Dodi?"

"Diana and Dodi broke the wall of sound in the past few weeks, annoying many people, and in 20 years perhaps the press will give us answers to the mysterious questions."

"Two answers exist: a clear one, the pursuit of the paparazzi and another one for those who like plots," Al Alam Al Yawm added.

"Diana was a star which shone and Dodi was a man who got burnt for getting too near to a shooting star," said the paper.

Dodi, a 41-year-old filmmaker and playboy with a home in Los Angeles, was little known in Egypt until pho-

tographs of his passionate embraces with Princess Diana appeared around the world.

But his father Mohammed, owner of Britain's luxury department store Harrods and the Ritz in Paris, has long had a stormy relationship with the British establishment — fuelling the Egyptian conspiracy theories.

The main Egyptian news agency MENA also suggested Sunday that foul play was responsible for the death of the glamorous couple and their driver.

"The scenario of the events and racist (verbal) attacks which preceded the accident suggest that it could have been a plot," it said.

Even the Al Ahram government daily, which usually shies away from sensationalism, quoted eyewitnesses to the crash saying they believed it was a "premeditated accident."

The Al Akhbar daily said the couple's death hailed the end of the "myth of a 20th century Cinderella."

"Emad (Dodi) Fayed lived like a prince and died with a princess," it added.

Kibbutzniks turn backs on roots of Zionism for capitalist comfort

DEGANIA (AFP) — After a century as the pre-eminent symbol of Zionism, the Israeli kibbutz has turned its back on the communal model inherited from the movement's pioneers, giving in to the comforts of family life and capitalist endeavours.

As the Zionist movement marked its 100th anniversary last week, Degania, the first Zionist farming commune, moved into a new era — voting to transform its collective dining room into a paying restaurant.

Founded in 1910 on the shores of the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel, Degania was obliged to bow to modern reality — the kibbutz's 350 residents simply would rather eat at home in their modest bungalows than share meals in the communal hall.

"It's the end of a symbol," said Elie Goldsmith, a Labour member of parliament who has lived at Degania for a decade.

"If the kibbutz members can give up collective meals today, tomorrow they'll abandon the other aspects of communal living," he said.

Already the time when "kibbutzniks" collectively chose the names of their children or the small "comrades" shared the rare pairs of leather shoes for an occasional trip to town are buri-

ly a distant memory.

Burdened with heavy debts, the vast majority of the 270 kibbutzim which are home to about 122,000 people in Israel have been forced to shift from their socialist past to a distinctively capitalist present.

"The kibbutzim have begun a process of privatisation and the implications of this are really beginning to appear only today," said Shlomo Getz, director of a research centre about kibbutz developments at Haifa University.

According to Mr. Getz, half of the kibbutzim employ salaried employees to handle tasks once shared by residents, while a third permit members to own their own cars and a fifth are planning to abandon the system under which a commune's earnings are equally distributed to all.

At the same time the kibbutzim are abandoning their agricultural roots and turning to more profitable industrial pursuits.

Degania has totally given up its fields and today lives exclusively from the \$25 million earned each year by Toot Gal, a factory that makes diamond cutting equipment.

"The economic problems of the kibbutzim served as a catalyst for change, but the crisis is really more profound, involving the entire socialist ideology

which originally lay behind the movement," said Shlomo Prital, the secretary, or "mayor," of Kibbutz Maale Ahamisha near Jerusalem.

"Kibbutz members have become more demanding, more interested in their own needs," he said.

"They no longer see the kibbutz as a commune but as a grouping of individual entities," Mr. Prital said during an interview in the lobby of the 340-room hotel — equipped with state-of-the-art health club — which provides Maale Ahamisha with most of its income.

Mr. Prital says he is one of the kibbutz movement's "conservatives" but has had to make concessions in order to "make Maale Ahamisha attractive" for its 200 members.

"We are letting more and more members work and achieve things outside the kibbutz," he said. Like about 50 other kibbutzim, Maale Ahamisha is planning to build private homes alongside the communal housing so non-members can benefit from the kibbutz "quality of life," Mr. Prital said. "Many kibbutzim are going to evolve into cooperative villages where only education and health services will be handled by the community," predicted Degania's Goldsmith.

Dodi, well covered by British media while alive, is now buried and ignored

LONDON (AFP) — Diana's companion Dodi Fayed had grabbed the headlines of the British tabloids since his romance with Diana began, but his tragic death alongside the princess barely got a passing mention Monday.

The Egyptian-born businessman, in line with Muslim tradition, was buried within hours of his death in a quiet family ceremony in London on Sunday while the British press concentrated on the arrangements for Diana's funeral next weekend.

Al-Fayed, the son of Harrods' owner Mohammed Fayed, was buried at the Brooklands cemetery near Guildford, southwest of London, less than 24 hours after the high-speed car crash in Paris that also killed the driver and seriously injured a bodyguard.

The aunt of Imad "Dodi" Fayed said Monday her brother Mohammed Fayed wanted Dodi buried in Britain so that he could often visit his eldest son's grave.

"We would have preferred that Dodi be buried in his home town, Alexandria, but my brother said he wanted his favourite son to remain nearby so he could visit his grave as often as possible," Suad Fayed told Agence France Presse (AFP).

Several tabloids, which printed pictures of Diana and Dodi together, mentioned in passing that the princess seemed to have found happiness with the 41-year-old mil-

lionaire.

The Daily Mirror in a short article pointed out that Fayed's prophecy of never having a girlfriend after Diana had proved tragically true.

The Daily Mail published a photo of Fayed in polo attire with a caption that read: "His team beat Prince Charles."

But although Dodi, who like his father was repeatedly denied British citizenship for unexplained reasons despite his family's business empire in Britain was not embraced by the British establishment, he was accepted by many, as attested by the number of people and tourists who paid tribute to him in messages scrawled on a book of condolences at Harrods' department store. One message read: "To a man who brought happiness to Diana." Fayed, who paraded his romantic conquests on yachts and in palaces, was the epitome of a playboy. But it was his involvement with the most photographed woman in the world which propelled him to the headlines five weeks ago.

The heir to the Fayed fortune, Dodi already had a string of attachments behind him when his romance with the princess came to the attention of the world's paparazzi.

Newspapers were quick to draw the parallel between Diana's romance with Dodi and that of Jacqueline Kennedy with the Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis.

Real or supposed affairs in-

Dodi buried in London because father wanted him near — aunt

ALEXANDRIA (AFP) — The aunt of Imad "Dodi" Fayed said Monday her brother Mohammed Fayed wanted Dodi buried in Britain so that he could often visit his eldest son's grave.

"We would have preferred that Dodi be buried in his home town, Alexandria, but my brother said he wanted his favourite son to remain nearby so he could visit his grave as often as possible," Suad Fayed told Agence France Presse (AFP).

Dodi, Princess Diana and their driver were killed in a high-speed car crash early Sunday in Paris. The bodyguard with them was seriously injured.

The 41-year-old Egyptian-born film maker, in line with Muslim tradition, was buried within hours of his death in a quiet family ceremony Sunday.

Dodi's past included the actress Brooke Shields and Prince Andrew's one-time date Koo Stark, and a host of models and show business personalities, but he was married only once, to model Susan Greigard in 1987. It lasted only eight months.

Family spokesman Michael

"This tragedy has really flooded me, and I'm going to London tomorrow to be at his side," Ms. Fayed said of her brother Mohammed Fayed, the billionaire owner of the London-based Harrods department store.

Suad also deplored the "defamatory" press campaign against her brother in Britain and other Western countries which portrayed them as social climbers.

Her daughter, Bustan Ibrahim, Dodi's first cousin, said "I don't expect any sympathy after the accident from the foreign media. They act as if they are conducting a vendetta against us."

Mohammed Fayed was the third child of an education ministry inspector. He has two brothers, Salah and Omar, and two sisters, Sayfa and Suad.

At the beginning of the 1950s, the family founded

the shipping company Adriatica which uses the deluxe Italian liners Esperia and Ausonia in the Mediterranean, a maritime agent in Alexandria, told AFP.

Imad Al-Fayed, known as Dodi, was born April 15, 1956 to Mohammed Fayed and Samira Khashoggi, sister of Saudi billionaire Adnan Khashoggi. Their marriage lasted only two years.

However, Dodi grew up in luxury in his father's Alexandria home; near the summer palace of King Farouk.

After the Nasserite revolution in September 1962, Adriatica was nationalised.

"Mohammed stayed for two years, then he left for Britain," Suad Fayed said.

"Imad stayed with his uncles, aunts and cousins in Alexandria until 1971," she added.

Condolence messages for Princess Di flood royal Internet site

Combined agency dispatches

AN INTERNET site opened by Buckingham Palace to receive condolences over Princess Diana's death has been flooded with messages of grief Monday, the palace said Monday.

A spokesman said by early afternoon more than 60,500 messages had been received on the site which includes a biography of the 36-year-old princess and press releases about her tragic death.

The site was visited by more than half a million people on Sunday.

The palace site (<http://www.royal.gov.uk>) home-page appears on computer screens with white lettering against a black background with the words: "Diana, Princess of Wales, July 1, 1961 - August 31, 1997."

Written at the bottom of the space reserved for condolences is a message stating: "Thank you for your kind message of condolence for the sad loss of Diana, Princess of Wales."

Another Internet site called "Tears flow across nations" (<http://www.royalnetwork.co.uk/tears.html>) opens with a portrait of the princess dressed in white against a background of grey and blue clouds.

The site was also flooded with hundreds of messages from all over the globe, including Poland, the United Arab Emirates, Panama, Guam and Sri Lanka.

"This is a huge loss for all people in the world but you will never be forgotten," read one message from Greenland.

The website, which was later expanded, carries pages of royal history, illustrated with paintings, photos and previously unseen prints from the royal collection.

A page listing the members of the current royal family did include Diana, divorced last year from her husband Prince Charles. But Sarah, duchess of York, who divorced the queen's second son Andrew, was not on show.

Algerian authorities place Madani under house arrest

ALGIERS (AP) — Algerian authorities placed the former leader of a banned Islamist group under house arrest Monday, a day after he called for dialogue to end the country's 5 1/2 year insurgency.

The Algerian government order said Abassi Madani must remain in his home and may have contact only with his family members.

Authorities threatened to send him back to prison if he disobeyed.

Mr. Madani, who was freed from jail July 15 after spending six years in prison, had already received one warning to refrain from political activity since his release.

But over the weekend, Mr. Madani in an open letter had urged the United Nations to "open a serious dialogue" to end the violence that has claimed more than 60,000 lives.

Violence continued unabated, and independent sources and media said Monday that militants had killed 33 civilians and security forces killed 15 militants.

Nineteen of the civilians were members of two families, and 13 of the dead were children, including three infants. They were slain over the weekend in a western coastal area known as Miramar, about 150 kilometers south of Algiers.

The 14 other civilians were killed early Saturday by armed men who erected a fake police barricade near Khemis Niliana, about 100 kilometers outside the North African nation's capital.

Witnesses said the attackers sprayed two packed taxis with gunfire, killing everyone inside.

Algerian government security forces, meanwhile, killed 15 suspected militants in a gun battle in north-central Algeria on Sunday, sources said. It was not immediately known whether any security forces were wounded or killed.

About 1,500 people have

been killed in attacks attributed to Islamist since early June, when the government swept Algeria's first multiparty elections with promises to crush the insurgency. In August alone, about 700 people were believed killed.

The insurgency erupted in 1992 after the military-backed government cancelled a parliamentary runoff that the Islamic Salvation Front was expected to win.

The militants want a government based on their strict interpretation of Koranic law, which would require women to cover their heads, ban alcohol and institute compulsory religious education among other things.

Mideast crisis hits papal hope for Holy Land visit to mark 2000th birthday of Jesus Christ

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Hardline Israeli policies and the ongoing crisis in the peace process are undermining hopes for a visit to the Holy Land by Pope John Paul II to mark the 2000th birthday of Jesus, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem said Monday.

"If this conflict continues and there is still bloodshed, the circumstances will not be right for a visit by the pope," Patriarch Michel Sabbah said.

Patriarch Sabbah told a press conference that recent Israeli sanctions on the Palestinians which prevented Christian pilgrims from reaching holy sites, notably the birthplace of Christ in Bethlehem, had created serious hardships.

"If this continues or is repeated in the year 2000, there will be a real problem for pilgrims," he said.

Israel sealed off Bethlehem to virtually all tourists for nearly a month following the Jerusalem bombing.

The Israeli government justified the sanctions, which included a ban on most Palestinians entering Israel or Jerusalem for the past month, as a security measure needed to prevent further attacks by militants.

But Patriarch Sabbah lamented the crackdown as a "collective punishment imposed on the Holy Land and the Palestinians."

He also noted that the sanctions had hindered efforts to prepare Bethlehem for celebrations to mark the 2000th birthday of Jesus at the city's Church of the Nativity, by tradition located on the site of the manger where Christ was born.

"There is currently no ability on the ground to receive the millions of pilgrims expected for these celebrations," he said.

During a sermon on Sunday Pope expressed his "very deep concern" over the tensions in Bethlehem and "the enormous difficulties faced by the local population and by all the Palestinian territories."

Speaking at his summer residence in Castelgandolfo, Italy, the Pope welcomed Israel's decision last week to lift the siege on Bethlehem, but said he hoped this was only a first step "towards a normalisation which becomes more important every day."

Patriarch Sabbah said it was imperative for Israel to resume peace negotiations with the Palestinian National Authority to tackle the key remaining issues of the peace process, and notably the future status of Jerusalem.

"Without a political solution on the status of the Holy City, the year 2000 celebrations could be disturbed," he said.

"We believe peace is the only solution, and we understand peace to mean full freedom and sovereignty for Palestinians and full peace

Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Michel Sabbah gestures during a press conference Monday where he said that the Vatican had appealed to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to revive peace negotiations but received no response (Reuters photo)



and security for Israelis," he said. He criticised the policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a "political vision which lacks logic and does not help achieve the peace we are looking for."

He notably lashed out at Mr. Netanyahu's decision last March to begin construction of a new Jewish settlement on

China sells arms to Iraq

WASHINGTON — Iraq's military program to develop nuclear weapons is a top priority for the United States, a senior State Department official said Monday.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the United States is "very concerned" about Iraq's nuclear program and is working to prevent it from becoming a nuclear power.

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Crown Prince role of Russia

WASHINGTON — The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Prince Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, is expected to visit the United States this week, a State Department official said Monday.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the visit is part of a series of high-level Saudi delegations to the United States aimed at strengthening ties between the two countries.

Israel rules ahead of A

WASHINGTON — Israel's new government is expected to announce its policies on the Palestinian issue in the coming days, a State Department official said Monday.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the new government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, is expected to announce its policies on the Palestinian issue in the coming days.

paparazzi probe for

WASHINGTON — The paparazzi who pursued Princess Diana and her companion Dodi Fayed in a Paris tunnel last week are being investigated by French authorities, a source close to the investigation said Monday.

The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the investigation is focused on the actions of the paparazzi who were pursuing the couple in the tunnel, and not on the couple themselves.

The investigation is being conducted by the Paris police, and the source said that the results of the investigation will be made public in the coming days.

The source also said that the investigation is being conducted in a discreet manner, and that the results of the investigation will be made public in the coming days.

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